

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy, Lieutenant Governor Way, and the Oliver Family Unveil Official Portrait of The Honorable Lieutenant Governor Sheila Y. Oliver

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TRENTON – Governor Murphy, Lieutenant Governor Way, and the Oliver family today unveiled the official portrait of the Honorable Lieutenant Governor Sheila Y. Oliver, which will be displayed permanently in the New Jersey State House. Oliver served as New Jersey's second Lieutenant Governor and was the first woman of color to serve in statewide elected office in New Jersey history.

In August 2023, following Lieutenant Governor Oliver's passing, Governor Murphy [announced the commissioning of her official portrait](https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562023/20230807a.shtml) (<https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562023/20230807a.shtml>).

, as well as a portrait for New Jersey's first Lieutenant Governor, Kim Guadagno, in hopes of honoring and recognizing their hard work, service, and leadership. By establishing this precedent, the Governor sought to begin a new tradition whereby all former lieutenant governors will be honored with this special recognition.

"I am honored to join Lieutenant Governor Way and the Oliver family for this important ceremony celebrating the life and legacy of Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver," **said Governor Murphy**. "Sheila's passion and lifelong dedication to the people of New Jersey left an indelible mark on our state. And now, her legacy as a trailblazer and a loyal public servant will be immortalized in the halls of the State House, inspiring generations of leaders to come."

"Lieutenant Governor Oliver was a dear friend and colleague, mentor, and represented the highest values of public service," **said Lieutenant Governor Tahesha Way**. "She left a lasting mark on our great state and the people she served, inspiring generations of leaders, especially young women of color. This portrait will be a lasting tribute to her tireless work to make our state a better place."

"We're deeply honored by this tribute to our beloved Sheila," **said the Oliver Family**. "This portrait captures her grace and strength, reflecting her lifelong commitment to uplifting others and creating a more compassionate New Jersey. We're grateful that her memory will continue to inspire future generations through this lasting recognition."

“Lieutenant Governors hold a vital and often unsung role in New Jersey state government,” **said former Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno**. “Lieutenant Governor Oliver made a lasting mark on our state through her incredible career of public service. Serving the people of our great state is a bond I will always cherish, and Sheila was a trusted, highly respected colleague whose historic tenure as Assembly Speaker overlapped with my time as Lieutenant Governor.”

“An artist painting a posthumous portrait is tasked with capturing the essence of a person without the benefit of interaction with the sitter, as would be possible with a living subject. Here, by reviewing a wide range of photographs of the late Lieutenant Governor, the artist has captured Sheila Oliver’s vivacity, warmth, intelligence and strength through the use of color and a direct gaze,” **said Margaret O’Reilly, Executive Director of the New Jersey State Museum and Curator of the New Jersey State House Portrait Collection**. “The slightly unfinished background is a metaphor for life ended much too soon.”

“Though I never met the Lieutenant Governor Oliver personally, I perceived a quiet strength as I studied her face for the portrait,” **said Kathy Fieramosca, painter of Lieutenant Governor Oliver’s official portrait**. “Her smile exuded warmth and her straightforward pose showed both dignity and a down-to-earth stance. I feel honored to have had the privilege to paint the portrait of Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver.”

The State Museum began working with the Oliver’s family on her commission following [Governor Murphy’s August 2023 announcement](https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562023/20230807a.shtml) (<https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562023/20230807a.shtml>).

Portraits commissioned for lieutenant governors will be hung in the Lieutenant Governor’s Suite in the New Jersey State House, rather than in the Governor’s Outer Office or in the State House Rotunda.

History of Gubernatorial Portraits:

Before the mid-twentieth century, New Jersey governors did not customarily have official portraits commissioned by the State when they left office. Instead, portraits were either privately commissioned or donated. Governor Robert Meyner, when he left office in 1962, was the first governor to have an official portrait commissioned by the State. Official commissions have continued with every modern governor except for Governor Richard Hughes, whose portrait was donated. Since 1978, the New Jersey State Museum has overseen the portraits, known collectively as the State House Portrait Collection.

Biography for Lieutenant Governor Oliver:

Sheila Y. Oliver served as New Jersey’s 2nd Lieutenant Governor from January 16, 2018, until her passing on August 1, 2023. A self-described “Jersey Girl,” born and raised in an ethnically diverse Newark neighborhood, Lieutenant Governor Oliver was inspired as a young girl to be a fighter for the voiceless when her eyes were opened to societal injustices and inequities around her, often citing “A Tale of Two Cities” as her youth awakening. She pioneered a

successful career in public service advocating for social justice, women's equality, and education, ultimately in 2017 becoming the first woman of color to serve in a statewide elected office in New Jersey history. In 2021, Lt. Governor Oliver was reelected to serve a second term in office.

In addition to her role as Lieutenant Governor, she served as Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs, where she led efforts to strengthen and expand initiatives for fair and affordable housing, community revitalization, homelessness prevention, and local government services that support New Jersey's 564 municipalities. Under her leadership, the Department also expanded and leveraged a wide range of initiatives aimed at assisting distressed municipalities, including the federal Opportunity Zones tax incentive, the Main Street New Jersey program, the Neighborhood Preservation Program, the Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit program, and the Urban Enterprise Zone Program, which was renewed by legislation she signed in 2021.

In her role as Acting Governor, she signed multiple bills into law, including those that established a Caregiver Task Force to identify ways to support people taking care of loved ones who are elderly or disabled, require all public school students in grades 6-8 to receive financial literacy education, strengthen equal pay for equal work by preventing employers from asking employees' previous salary history, and protect employees from wage theft. She also signed into law legislation that established a Restorative and Transformative Justice for Youths and Communities Pilot Program within the Juvenile Justice Commission to help divert youth from entering and re-entering the juvenile justice system.

Across her career, Lieutenant Governor Oliver worked in the public, non-profit, and private sectors, and has taught numerous college courses. She has served as a member of both the East Orange Board of Education and the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders. In 2003, she was elected to serve the 34th Legislative District in the New Jersey General Assembly.

A trailblazer in every sense of the word, in 2010 she became the first African American woman in state history to serve as Assembly Speaker, and just the second in the nation's history to lead a state legislative house.

A proud alumna of the Newark public school system, Lieutenant Governor Oliver graduated cum laude from Lincoln University, and received her Master of Science Degree in Community Organization, Planning and Administration from Columbia University. She has received honorary doctorates of humane letters from the New Jersey Institute of Technology, Lincoln University, Montclair University, Stockton University and Berkeley and Essex County Colleges.

She was a proud 40-plus-year resident of East Orange where she treasured her time with her 95-year-old mother, who always encouraged her to be a critical thinker while fostering her passion for helping people through effective public policy. Lieutenant Governor Oliver was preceded in death by her father Charles Clay Oliver Sr. She leaves to mourn her mother Jennie Oliver, brother Charles Clay Oliver Jr., Sister In-Law Sylvia Oliver, nieces and nephew/Godson Leah, Charles and Renee Oliver. Great nieces and nephews Jaxson, Kayela, Kaari, Charles (CJ), and Jru, along with a host of family and friends.

Bio for Portrait Artist Kathy Fieramosca

Kathy Krantz Fieramosca is a fine arts painter working in watercolor, graphite, silverpoint and oil in a representational manner. Her paintings hang in various private and public collections. Public collections include Montefiore Hospital in New York City, Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas and the CIA Headquarters in Langley, Virginia.

Ms. Krantz Fieramosca is a former illustrator who worked in the advertising, editorial and publishing industries for fifteen years. Her client list had included J. Walter Thompson Advertising, Young and Rubicam, Kenyon and Eckhart, Family Circle Magazine, Woman's World Magazine, Parent's Magazine, Reader's Digest, Viking Press, Good Housekeeping Magazine, Essence Magazine and Inside Sports Magazine.

Born in Ohio, Ms. Krantz Fieramosca graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Columbus College of Art and Design in 1975. In addition, she studied at the School of Visual Arts, the Art Students League of New York, the Grand Central Art Academy, the National Academy of Design, the Drawing Academy of the Atlantic, the New York Academy of Art, and privately with artists: Daniel E. Greene, Michael Aviano, and Jon DeMartin.

For an image of Lieutenant Governor Oliver's official portrait, please click [here](#)

(https://d31hzhk6di2h5.cloudfront.net/20250814/73/f1/76/79/3f8b05a749d4b62597580043/Screenshot_2025-08-14_at_11.41.19_AM.png).

Governor Phil Murphy

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Office of Governor PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-6000