Frankie Sue Del Papa—Democrat (Elected)
29th Nevada Attorney General

Biography

Frankie Sue Del Papa, born in 1949 in Hawthorne, Nevada, grew up in Tonopah, Nevada. She attended junior high and high school in Las Vegas and the University of Nevada, Reno ("UNR"). In 1971, she graduated with a bachelor’s degree in political science.¹ Del Papa not only excelled in school, she also honed, and excelled in, her leadership skills while serving as the first female ASUN ("Associated Students of the University of Nevada") student body president at UNR.

After she graduated from UNR, Del Papa attended George Washington University Law School in Washington, D.C. and graduated with a J.D. in 1974. During her third year of law school, she started a campaign to help prevent the destruction of a pre-Revolutionary times home on Capitol Hill. The house was, and still is, the headquarters and museum of the U.S. women's suffrage and equal rights movements located in Washington, D.C.²

In 1980, the voters elected Del Papa to the University Board of Regents to represent District 1B in Northern Nevada. She beat the incumbent, Dr. Louis Lombardi, in the September primary with 6,423 votes to his 5,943 votes, a margin of 480 votes. In the general election, Del Papa beat him with 17,095 to his 13,206 votes, a margin of 3,889 votes.

In 1986, Del Papa, a trailblazer for women in Nevada politics, became the first woman elected Secretary of State. “Our state, no matter what anybody says about Nevada, I think the voters here are willing to give you a chance,” said Frankie Sue Del Papa.³ James Hulse, in his book, The Silver State: Nevada’s Heritage Reinterpreted, commented on the “expanding role of women in Nevada’s governments”.

As the 20th century approached its end, women were playing increasingly prominent roles in Nevada’s governments. In 1982, Barbara Vucanovich of Reno was the first woman to be elected to Congress from Nevada; she served seven terms before retiring. Sue Wagner, also of Reno, was the first woman elected lieutenant governor in 1990, and Miriam Shearing of Las Vegas set two precedents as the first woman to sit on the state supreme court (1993) and the first to serve as chief justice (1997-98). Frankie Sue Del Papa [was the first woman to] win election as secretary of state in 1986 and as attorney general in 1990, 1994, and 1998. In the 1995 and

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1997 sessions of the legislature[,] approximately one-third of the seats were held by women.\textsuperscript{4, 5}

In 1989, as Secretary of State, Del Papa also chaired Nevada’s 125\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of statehood celebration, and the 1989 Legislature authorized the first license plate to generate revenue for a specific cause or organization (Celebration of Anniversary).\textsuperscript{6} Assembly Bill 878 (Chapter 540, NRS 482.379) approved and authorized the issuance of a special license plate to commemorate the 125\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of Nevada’s admission into the Union.\textsuperscript{7} Car owners [were able to] purchase the new, four-color plate instead of the regular silver-and-blue Nevada plate.\textsuperscript{8} Del Papa persuaded the Nevada State Legislature to give over $600,000 collected from these special plates to the Secretary of State’s Office for the celebration of the State’s 125\textsuperscript{th} anniversary. As part of the Birthday celebration, Del Papa also spear-headed tree-planting work and encouraged everyone to plant trees all over the State.

After serving as Nevada’s Secretary of State, Del Papa campaigned for Attorney General. Perhaps the hottest contest was in the Democratic primary for attorney general, where Nevada Secretary of State Frankie Sue Del Papa was seeking “to move up”.\textsuperscript{9} Her principal opponent was a former Las Vegas Judge, Leonard Gang.\textsuperscript{10}

On November 6, 1990, Del Papa became Nevada’s 29\textsuperscript{th} Attorney General and the first woman elected to that office.\textsuperscript{11} During her 12 years as Attorney General, Del Papa established a Medicaid fraud unit and a workers’ compensation fraud unit, enhanced the consumer protection unit within the Attorney General’s Office, created the first statewide domestic violence commission and supported the prevention of teen pregnancies, and fought against nuclear waste disposal on Yucca Mountain.


\textsuperscript{5} Chereb, Sandra. \textit{Las Vegas Review-Journal}. "Women in Nevada Scale the Pinnacles of Politics or at Least Most of Them." July 31, 2016. In 1918, Sadie Hurst, a Washoe County Republican, was the first woman “elected to the Nevada Assembly” . . . . [In 1986], Patty Cafferata, the daughter of Congresswoman Barbara Vucanovich, “was the first woman elected to a state constitutional office, winning the race for state treasurer.” https://www.reviewjournal.com/local/local-nevada/women-in-nevada-scale-the-pinnacles-of-politics-or-at-least-most-of-them/. Accessed 7.19.18.


\textsuperscript{11} Political History of Nevada 2006, Issued by Dean Heller, Secretary of State. 2006. Page 194.
In Del Papa’s advocacy for domestic violence prevention, she established the Nevada Council for the Prevention of Domestic Violence in 1995. The Council, a statewide advisory committee, focused on eliminating and preventing domestic violence by raising awareness of the “existence and unacceptability of domestic violence; making recommendations to the Office of the Attorney General for any necessary legislation relating to domestic violence issues; and providing financial support to programs for the prevention of domestic violence in the State.”

In addition to her efforts to prevent domestic violence, Del Papa worked in cooperation with the State Health Division to prevent teen pregnancies. After reviewing statistics showing that “72 percent of the men involved in teenage pregnancy were over 20”, Del Papa asked district attorneys to be tougher on date rape and statutory rape cases. If consequences were severe enough for older men having sex with teenage girls, they might “think twice before becoming involved with a young girl.”

In 1997, the Nevada Legislature approved the creation of the Bureau of Consumer Protection to better protect consumers against deceptive trade practices and antitrust violations. That same year, Del Papa announced the opening of the Bureau of Consumer Protection within the Attorney General’s Office. Del Papa’s office investigated or participated in settlement agreements with multiple states, in many cases, including the multi-billion national Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement; a $3.9 Million antitrust settlement against a national agricultural chemicals manufacturer (Zeneca) that allegedly fixed the resale prices of its product; a multi-state settlement with Sears, Roebuck & Co. in an investigation into illegal collection practices (Sears violated State Consumer Protection Law by pressuring consumers to agree to pay off debts that had been cleared in bankruptcy); and many others.

On January 11, 2000, First Assistant Attorney General Thomas M. Patton presented a Statement of Frankie Sue Del Papa to the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management Regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for a Geologic Repository for the Disposal of Spent Nuclear Fuel and High-Level Radioactive Waste at Yucca Mountain, Nye Count, Nevada, in which Papa stated: “In late 1987, Congress singled out Nevada as the sole site to be examined for suitability to construct the country’s first high-level nuclear waste repository.” Del Papa believed that the Yucca Mountain Project was “seriously flawed in numerous respects.” She pointed out that in terms of isolation, rather than relying on geological barriers, the Yucca Mountain Project mostly relies on “engineered barriers which cannot insure isolation of the [nuclear] waste for an adequate amount of time. Also, Yucca Mountain is a complex geologic area that has been and continues to be subject to frequent earthquakes, hydrothermal upwelling, and volcanic activity.”

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15 [http://www.state.nv.us/nucwaste/eis/yucca/ym00002.htm](http://www.state.nv.us/nucwaste/eis/yucca/ym00002.htm). 8.10.17.
16 [Ibid.](http://www.state.nv.us/nucwaste/eis/yucca/ym00002.htm).
Del Papa indicated that the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) did not “describe the proposed project in a way that allow[ed] for a reasonable analysis of its impacts.” She believed that the project could have an impact on Nevada’s environment, Nevada’s tourism, and residents all across the United States. The Yucca Mountain Project would be a high risk for the future contamination of Nevada’s groundwater. Also, the risks and stigmas that are associated with nuclear waste would have a negative impact on tourism in Nevada, causing Nevada’s economy to plummet. There are 77 different waste sites nationwide, and the waste from those sites all would be transported to Yucca Mountain.17

Del Papa also stated that the Draft EIS failed to inform “over 50 million residents [living] within a half of a mile of transportation routes . . . that they are within harm's way.”18

Del Papa also was a strong advocate for the environment.

Secretary of State Dean Heller and Del Papa joined with Boulder City Mayor Bob Ferraro and Washoe County Manager Katy Simon-Singlaub in issuing the first challenge to all Nevada citizens to take part in the ‘Trees 2000 Project.’ The goal of the project [was] to plant drought-resistant and regionally appropriate trees and wildflowers in every part of the state, as a gift to future generations of Nevadans in celebration of the Millennium. Del Papa said, ‘The Trees 2000 Project will serve many purposes including, improving air quality and enhancing the environment of our state, while at the same time passing down a lasting legacy to future generations of Nevada citizens. Our hope is that businesses, groups, schools, and other entities will challenge each other to plant trees in their community as part of this project. As part of this project, the various entities will be asked to assess the value on our daily lives of the trees being planted.”19

Del Papa arranged for trees to be planted on both sides of the entrance to the old Nevada Supreme Court and by the Frankie Sue Del Papa (also known as the old Ormsby County Courthouse) buildings. Both buildings, along with the Heroes Memorial Building and Heroes Memorial Annex, comprise the current office buildings of the Nevada Attorney General.

In 2001, Del Papa received the Frederick Law Olmsted Award at the 28th annual Arbor Day Awards celebration for her efforts in tree planting and environmental stewardship.20

In 2002, Del Papa charged 12 major drug companies for “grossly inflating the cost of prescription drugs by employing an elaborate pricing scheme to rob states and

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17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
consumers nationwide of millions of dollars . . . . We believe that what these drug manufacturers have done is outrageous.”

Del Papa was instrumental in securing a three-year, $480,000 grant from the Administration on Aging for her office’s project for curbing Medicare and Medicaid mistakes, fraud and abuse.

Del Papa is the second of only two Attorneys General who served three consecutive terms of office from 1991-2003—Gray Mashburn, Nevada’s 19th Attorney General, served three terms from 1931-1943. Harvey Dickerson, Nevada’s 22nd and 25th Attorney General, also served three terms, however, they were bifurcated: he served his first term from 1955-1959 and an additional two terms from 1963-1971.

In 1998, Del Papa discussed a possible run for Governor and in 1999, a run for the United States Senate but never filed for either office largely due to a lack of campaign funds . . . “a big issue she says female politicians face.”

On September 11, 2002, then-Governor Kenny Guinn, at the dedication ceremony of the old Ormsby County Courthouse, named the newly-remodeled office building after Del Papa, “in honor of all [your] years of public service.”

In 2002, after concluding her service as Attorney General, Del Papa also ended her career in elected office. A reporter asked her, “[l]ooking back, which of the offices you held did you like the most?” She replied: “Probably attorney general, I’d say without a doubt, in the sense that it was the most substantive. All of the offices, I think, were important and interesting and made you feel like you were making a difference. But the most substantial and the one with the most responsibility was attorney general.”

In 2003, Del Papa began providing consulting services to various companies. With her passion for learning and education, Del Papa then taught public policy courses for 12 years at the University of Nevada, Reno. She also has remained active in supporting women’s rights and protecting the environment.

As of 2018, Del Papa currently is an attorney in private practice. She remains active with the National Association of Attorneys General and is a member of the Society of Attorneys General Emeritus.

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23 Political History of Nevada 2006, Issued by Dean Heller, Secretary of State. 2006. Pages 192.

24 Political History of Nevada 2006, Issued by Dean Heller, Secretary of State. 2006. Pages 192.


26 By Frankie Sue Del Papa, as told to this reporter. August 6, 2018.


Some years later, when was asked what she missed about being Nevada’s Attorney General, Del Papa replied:

I miss the ability to make a difference on a grand scale. I had a great run of 22 years of public service. As secretary of state, I was proud of what we did with voter registration. As A[torney] G[eneral], it was my privilege to modernize the office. Every day I got to try to make a difference and work with very good people. I did a lot of consumer protection. I established a Medicaid fraud unit . . . . I created the first statewide domestic violence commission . . . . I got involved with teen pregnancy prevention after we had an 11-year-old give birth to a baby . . . . There were a lot of people who were right there with me, a lot of unsung heroes and heroines.29

General Election of 1986

Of the 257,680 votes cast in the General Election for Secretary of State on November 4, 1986, Del Papa (Democrat) won by a margin of 26,907 votes in the General Election on November 4, 1986. She received 132,873 (51.57%) votes to Barbara Zimmer’s (Republican) 105,966 (41.12%) votes; “None of these Candidates” 11,055 (4.29%) votes; and Dan Becan’s (Libertarian) 7,786 votes (3.02%) votes.30

Primary Election of 1990 – Attorney General

Of the 88,174 votes cast in the Democratic Primary for Attorney General on September 4, 1990, Del Papa won by a margin of 19,488 votes. She received 50,067 (56.87%) votes to Leonard Gang’s 30,579 (34.68%) votes; “None of these Candidates” 3,801 (4.31%) votes; and Joseph Kadans’ 3,727 (4.22%) votes.31

30 Political History of Nevada, 2006. Issued by Dean Heller, Secretary of State. Page 408.
General Election of 1990

Del Papa was elected as Nevada’s 29th Attorney General on November 6, 1990. Of the 318,680 votes cast, Del Papa (Democrat) received 177,919 (55.83%) votes to Bryan Nelson’s (Republican) 118,345 (37.14%) votes; “None of These Candidates” 12,207 (3.83%) votes; and Louis R. Tomburello’s (Libertarian) 10,209 (3.2%) votes.  

Primary Election of 1994

Of the 118,550 votes cast in the Democratic Primary for Attorney General on September 6, 1994, Del Papa won by a margin of 35,067 votes. She received 67,002 (56.52%) votes to Bob Rose’s 31,935 (26.93%) votes; “None of these Candidates” 10,224 (8.62%) votes; and Margot Sierra Holcomb’s 9,389 (7.92%) votes.  

General Election of 1994

Del Papa was reelected as Attorney General on November 8, 1994, by a margin of 56,058 votes. Of the 379,028 votes cast, Del Papa (Democrat) received 200,963 (53.02%) votes to Bill Maddox’s (Republican) 144,925 (38.23%) votes; Joel Hansen’s (Independent American) 22,402 (5.91%) votes; and “None of These Candidates” 10,738 (2.83%) votes.  

Primary Election of 1998

Of the 103,069 votes cast in the Democratic Primary for Attorney General on September 1, 1998, Del Papa won by a margin of 59,470 votes. She received 78,191 (75.86%) votes.
to Marilyn O'Connor’s 18,721 (18.16%) votes; and “None of these Candidates” 6,157 (5.98%) votes.\textsuperscript{35}

**General Election of 1998**

Del Papa was reelected Attorney General for a third term on November 3, 1998, by a margin of 28,082 votes. Of the 410,335 votes cast, Del Papa (Democrat) received 210,571 (51.32%) votes to Scott Scherer’s (Republican) 182,489 (44.47%) votes; Kent Cromwell II’s (Libertarian) 7,672 (1.86%) votes; and Joel Hansen’s (Independent American) 9,603 (2.34%) votes.\textsuperscript{36}

**Office Administration and Duties**

The Nevada Attorney General’s operating budgets for the 1991-2003 state bi-annual fiscal periods were as follows:


- $3,059,751 For the support of the Office of the Attorney General
- $587,196 Attorney General Administrative Fund
- $100,000 For the Special Litigation Account of the Attorney General
- $78,390 For the Support of the Crime Prevention Program


- $4,853,185-$4,895,915 Attorney General Administration
- $2,030,807-$2,833,677 Tort Claim Fund
- $2,034,482-$1,944,609 Fraud Control Unit for Industrial Insurance
- $757,829-$768,462 Medicaid Fraud Unit
- $649,770-$683,468 Insurance Fraud Unit
- $2,500-$2,500 Crime Prevention and Missing Children Program
- $103,971-$103,971 Special Fund
- $47,458-$50,814 Office of the Extradition Coordinator
- $316,969-$248,352 Private Investigators’ Licensing Board
- $1,421,144-$1,505,121 Consumer’s Advocate

### 1995-1996 and 1996-1997 Fiscal Years’ Budget

- $4,059,833-$4,358,572 Attorney General Administration
- $3,287,241-$3,291,897 Tort Claim Fund
- $1,610,056-$1,372,774 Workers Compensation-Fraud Unit
- $151,000 Special Fund
- $55,000-$55,000 Office of the Extradition Coordinator
- $216,499-$510,630 Private Investigators’ Licensing
- $1,220,373-$1,225,750 Consumer’s Advocate


\textsuperscript{36} *Id.* Page 556.
Appropriated from the state general fund to the Office of the Attorney General “for the
purposed of enforcing NRS 202.2493 [Cigarettes, smokeless products made or derived
from tobacco and alternative nicotine products to be sold in unopened package only; sale
and distribution of cigarettes, other tobacco products, vapor products and alternative
nicotine products to minor prohibited; owner of retail establishment required to display
notice concerning prohibition against sale of tobacco products, vapor products and
alternative nicotine products to minors; sale of cigarettes by retailer through use of certain
displays prohibited; penalties], for fiscal years 1995-96 and 1996-97: $60,000.

1997-98 and 1998-99 Fiscal Years’ Budget

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<th>Amount</th>
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<td>$5,098,718-$4,905,089</td>
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<td>$861,869-$830,692</td>
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<td>$829,261-$10,481</td>
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<td>$13,36 -$13,365</td>
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<td>$1,945,162-$1,849,688</td>
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1999-2000 and 2000-2001 Fiscal Years’ Budget

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<td>$1,900,963-$1,841,465</td>
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<td>$60,740-$31,287</td>
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2001-2002 and 2002-2003 Fiscal Years’ Budget

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<td>$2,041,690-$2,026,821</td>
<td>Victims of Domestic Violence</td>
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</table>
The 1991 Nevada State Legislature added the following duties to the Attorney General’s job:

- The Attorney General, at the direction of the Nevada Gaming Commission, may institute a civil action in any district court of this state against any person subject to this chapter or chapter 462, 464 or 465 of NRS to restrain a violation of this chapter or chapter 463, 464 or 465 of NRS. (Statutes of Nevada 1991, Chapter 688, Section 41, Page 2268).

The 1993 Nevada State Legislature added the following duties to the Attorney General’s job:

- The Attorney General shall provide opinions for the commissioner of consumer affairs on all questions of law relating to the construction, interpretation, or administration of this chapter. (Statutes of Nevada 1993, Chapter 588, Section 19, Page 2462).

- The Attorney General shall represent the division in any action or proceeding brought by or against the commissioner of consumer affairs pursuant to any of the provisions of this chapter. (Statutes of Nevada 1993, Chapter 588, Section 19, Page 2462).

- The Attorney General shall

  a) Establish a program to coordinate activities and information in this state concerning missing or exploited children; and

  b) Appoint a director to administer the provisions of the program. (Statutes of Nevada 1993, Chapter 428, Section 4, Page 1374).

- The Attorney General shall, on or before January 31 of each year, prepare and submit a report to the governor and the director of the legislative counsel bureau concerning programs of information about missing or exploited children in this state and the identification and investigation of cases involving missing or exploited children. The director of the legislative counsel bureau shall make the report available to each senator and assemblyman. (Statutes of Nevada 1993, Chapter 428, Section 5, Page 1375).

The 1995 Nevada State Legislature added the following duties to the Attorney General’s job:

- Before authorizing an entity of the State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to use alternative means of dispute resolution, the Director of the State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources must notify the Attorney General. The Attorney General, within 30 days after his receipt of the notification from the director, shall respond to the director concerning the advisability of using alternative means of dispute resolution to resolve the dispute at issue. (Statutes of Nevada 1995, Chapter 606, Section 4, Page 2244).
The 1997 Nevada State Legislature added the following duties to the Attorney General’s job:

- The office of ombudsman for victims of domestic violence is hereby created within the office of the attorney general. The attorney general shall appoint a person to serve in the position of ombudsman for a term of four years. The attorney general may remove the ombudsman from office for inefficiency, neglect of duty, or malfeasance in office. (Statutes of Nevada 1997, Chapter 476, Section 27, Page 1819).

- The Attorney General shall appoint a committee on domestic violence. (Statutes of Nevada 1997, Chapter 476, Section 30, Page 1819).

- The Attorney General shall provide the committee with such staff as is necessary to carry out the duties of the committee on domestic violence. (Statutes of Nevada 1997, Chapter 476, Section 30, Page 1820).

The 1999 Nevada State Legislature did not add any additional duties to the Attorney General’s job.

The 2001 Nevada State Legislature did not add any additional duties to the Attorney General’s job.