



# Harriette Bailey Conn

(1922-1981)

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#### Sources:

- "Everyday People: Harriette Bailey Conn." *Traces of Indiana and Midwestern History*. Summer 2008.
- "Harriette Vesta Baily Conn, '55, Was IU McKinney's First African-American Female Graduate."
- Walsh, Justin E., ed. *A Biographical Directory of the Indiana General Assembly, Vol. II, 1900-1984*. Indiana Historical Bureau, 1984.

Indianapolis native Harriette Vesta Bailey Conn was a pioneering lawyer. In May 1970, the Indiana Supreme Court appointed Conn to be the State Public Defender, making her the first African American and first woman to serve in this position, which she held for over a decade until her death in 1981.

Conn graduated from Crispus Attacks High School in 1937 at the age of fourteen. She majored in English and speech at Talladega College in Alabama, graduating in 1941. Conn earned her law degree from Indiana University in Indianapolis in 1955 and was admitted to the bar the same year. Her career quickly skyrocketed.

For the next ten years, she served as deputy attorney general of the state under Edwin K. Steers. She then partnered with Marie T. Lauck and Jane Hunt Davis to open a private law practice in 1965. Running as a Republican, Conn was elected as a state representative from Marion County in 1966 and was reelected in 1968. She sponsored legislation relating to both civil rights and women's rights, among other issues.

After resigning from the legislature, Conn served as assistant city attorney under the Lugar administration and helped pen the Unigov council rules.

Conn was a member of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and a lifetime member of the NAACP. Outside of her busy career, she raised seven children and was active in and held leadership roles in a variety of social and civic organizations, including Cub and Girl Scouts, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority (Chi chapter), and the speaker bureau of the Maternal Health Fund, which later became Planned Parenthood. She was a two-time Sagamore of the Wabash recipient



*Photo Courtesy: IU Robert H. McKinney School of Law website*