



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John A. DeFrancisco

## SENATOR DEFRANCISCO HONORS PAULINE COPES JOHNSON AS HIS 2017 NEW YORK STATE SENATE WOMAN OF DISTINCTION

JOHN A. DEFRANCISCO May 9, 2017

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Senator John A. DeFrancisco (R-I-C, Syracuse) has named Pauline Copes Johnson of Auburn as his 2017 New York State Senate Women of Distinction honoree. Pauline is a community advocate and the great-great grandniece of Harriet Tubman, the famous American abolitionist and conductor on the Underground Railroad.

Pauline Copes Johnson will be honored at an awards ceremony in Hearing Room B of the Legislative Office Building in Albany, starting at 5:30 pm on May 9, 2017.

Pauline first learned that she was a descendant of Harriet Tubman when she was 25 years old. Since then, she has been researching her aunt and serving as a docent at the Harriet Tubman Home in Auburn. Pauline has traveled throughout the United States and across the globe to give presentations at schools, agencies, and community centers on the life of Harriet Tubman. Pauline's mission is to uphold her Aunt Harriet's legacy and to teach the importance of history.

Pauline also has been instrumental in preserving the life and legacy of her Aunt Harriet through various advocacy efforts. She lobbied for the redesign of the \$20 bill to feature the image of Harriet Tubman. She also promoted the U.S. Department of Interior's formal establishment of the Harriet Tubman National Historic Park in Auburn, as the 414th unit of the National Park System in January of 2017.

Pauline received the Martin Luther King Jr. Millennium Award and was then inducted into the NAACP Hall of Fame in 2017. She has received various other awards and proclamations from the City of Auburn, the Thompson Memorial AME Zion Church, the State of New York, and from the many places she has traveled.

Senator DeFrancisco said, "Pauline Copes Johnson has demonstrated an unwavering passion for preserving the important history of her family and our community. She has created positive change on the local, state and national levels, and I am proud to honor her as my 2017 New York State Senate Woman of Distinction."

Pauline was born on August 23, 1927 and raised in Auburn, NY, and graduated from West High School in 1945. She was hired by the New York Telephone Company as the first African-

American telephone operator in Cayuga County. She later worked in the office of the former Red Star Express for 20 years, and then at Auburn Correctional Facility. She continues to be an active member of the Thompson Memorial AME Zion Church in Auburn and the Harriet Tubman Boosters Club. Pauline and her late husband raised 12 children together.

The New York State Senate launched the Women of Distinction program in 1998 to recognize the many contributions of female New Yorkers. Today's ceremony is held to proclaim the special contributions of Pauline Copes Johnson and of all the 2017 New York State Senate Women of Distinction honorees.

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