

Honoring the Passing of Beth Shulman

America's workers, particularly those who labor at wages too low to support their families, lost a great champion with Friday's untimely death of noted author and labor attorney Beth Shulman. Over a career spanning more than 30 years, Beth was a fierce and tireless advocate for workers' rights, first as a civil rights lawyer in the south, then as a union attorney and eventually Vice President of the United Food & Commercial Workers International Union, and in more recent years, as a noted author and commentator as well as Chair of the National Employment Law Project (NELP) Board and leader within numerous other groups and initiatives. Through publications like **The Betrayal of Work**, Beth eloquently chronicled the daily struggles of low wage workers, and pointed to the policies needed to convert work into a ladder of opportunity and an anchor of economic security for all working families.

Beth's death is a personal loss to NELP's Board and staff. As Chair of NELP's Board since 2005, Beth led the organization through a period of substantial growth and program expansion that included enlarging NELP's substantive portfolio, building our staff and opening a Washington office, implementing a successful merger and increasing NELP's funding significantly. As was true throughout her career, Beth brought unflagging determination and drive to her leadership and stewardship of NELP. And as with so much that she touched throughout her too-short life, NELP is a stronger and better organization today because of Beth's commitment to it.

Beth's death is a poignant reminder of the importance of choosing wisely about the lives we live, the people and things we value, and the priorities we elevate. Beth's life exemplified wise choices. Her marriage to Ernie Englander was strong and happy; their young son, Aaron, is thriving; and she brought a rare and persistent eloquence to writing, speaking and consulting on workers' issues that transformed policy and changed people's lives for the better. She was conscious and deliberate in deciding how to spend her hours, carving out ample time for family, for friends and for herself. And she was always open to adventure and change.

Beth was diminutive in physical stature but outsized in every other way—in her intellect and interests, her energy and enthusiasm, her warmth and wit, and her determination to build fairer workplaces and a more just society for all. It is hard to contemplate Beth's death without thinking that hers was an unfinished life, one that held so much promise of hopes and dreams yet to be fulfilled. But it is equally hard to think of Beth's life without recognizing it as tremendously rich and rewarding, for her and for so many others—for those who knew and loved her, and for the millions of workers to whose struggles she gave voice.

On behalf of the board and staff of NELP, our thoughts and prayers are with Beth's family and friends; we will miss her dearly but her memory will continue to be a blessing and source of strength for years to come.