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CLOSING

RECORD-BREAKING ADMISSIONS SEASON

9,118

applications

CLASS OF 2029

172

median LSAT

3.9

median undergraduate GPA

The 322 students in Michigan Law's 1L class were admitted during a record-breaking admissions cycle that saw the most applicants in Law School history. The class also boasts the highest-ever median LSAT score and undergraduate GPA.

"At the very least, it's incredibly poor investigative work. I would even say reckless, in light of how harmful this is for the family. It should scare all of us."

—**Vivek Sankaran, '01**, director of the Child Welfare Appellate Clinic, quoted in the *Washington Post* about the false child abuse accusations leveled against former Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg.



"Skilled Skeptics" in the Age of AI

Members of the 1L class attended a lively discussion about the myriad ways artificial intelligence is shaping legal education and the practice of law. **Patrick Barry**, clinical assistant professor of law and the Law School's director of artificial intelligence initiatives, presented alongside Assistant Professor **Salomé Viljoen**, whose research focuses on the law and political economy of data and artificial intelligence.



Throwback Thirties

The Michigan Law facilities team uncovered a nearly century-old Law School logo during a classroom refurbishment this summer. Although students first moved into the Lawyers Club in the fall of 1924, the Law Quad remained unfinished until Hutchins Hall opened its doors in 1933.

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books were published by Michigan Law faculty in 2025–2026, as well as 108 articles and 14 book chapters. Explore their work at **repository.law.umich.edu/faculty_scholarship.**

"Any unfinished decision currently being considered, and any decision down the line that implicates the Great Lakes and the land submerged by those Great Lakes, is absolutely going to have to follow this opinion."

—**Oday Salim**, director of the Environmental Law and Sustainability Clinic, commenting on a recent Michigan Supreme Court ruling in *Michigan Advance*. The decision was a significant victory for opponents of Enbridge Energy's Line 5 pipeline through the Straits of Mackinac, and it is expected to strengthen state environmental protections for future projects.



A Celebration across Generations

For one weekend in September, Michigan Law alumni and their guests returned to Ann Arbor for a cross-generational Reunion. Classes celebrating their 5th through 50th and emeritus milestone anniversaries gathered in the Law Quad to reconnect with old friends, make new connections, and take part in a wide range of programming and activities, including class dinners, a tailgate, and football at Michigan Stadium. Although the Iowa Hawkeyes took home the victory in the last second, the enduring spirit of the Law School community was the overarching theme of the weekend.











BRIEFS



















Jennifer White Callaghan, '04: A Pro Bono Practice That Began at the Derivatives Desk

By James Weir

For Jennifer White Callaghan, '04, the path to a career in human rights law began in an unlikely place: the derivatives desk at some of the world's biggest banks.

Today, Callaghan is a senior pro bono lawyer at A&O Sherman, where she co-leads the pro bono program for the firm's US offices. She manages immigration matters involving refugees and asylum seekers, with a particular focus on Afghans seeking protected status in the United States. She also works on human rights and civil rights cases and connects lawyers across the firm with nonprofit organizations and individuals who need legal assistance.

It's a role that Callaghan describes as the best job in the world—and one that builds on her lifelong interest in human rights work and her decades of experience in finance and the law.



Jennifer White Callaghan, '04 (center, in yellow), is a senior pro bono lawyer at A&O Sherman, where she manages immigration matters involving refugees and asylum seekers, with a particular focus on Afghans seeking protected status in the United States.

A winding path

After earning an undergraduate degree in history and economics and a master's in government at Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania, respectively, Callaghan went into finance and worked for major banks as a derivatives trader. It was a relatively new field at the time, and the work took her to Hong Kong, London, and Singapore. She enjoyed the pace and novelty but eventually began looking for something new.

Law school had always appealed to her. Her stepmother, Patricia White, '74, was a professor at the Law School in the 1980s and early '90s, and Callaghan grew up with law and legal education as part of everyday life. She also had a longstanding interest in human rights, including service as a trustee of Doctors Without Borders. At Michigan Law, she pursued international and human rights-related coursework and joined Allen & Overy in London after graduation.

There, Callaghan spent 17 years developing the experience that would ultimately prepare her for full-time pro bono work. Her primary practice was transactional, with a focus on capital markets and derivatives. But she continued to pursue pro bono matters alongside her billable work, finding ways to apply her financial expertise to social impact projects. She worked on microfinance transactions and explored how financial markets could be used to address humanitarian challenges.

Her projects included a very early social finance structure designed to fund programs aimed at reducing recidivism among people released from Peterborough Prison in England, as well as an effort to use commodity derivatives to help manage the cost of food purchased for humanitarian relief.

That combination of transactional experience alongside years of pro bono work became critical when Callaghan moved into the pro bono group full time in late 2019.

Helping immigrants find a new home

More recently, much of Callaghan's work has been on behalf of Afghans seeking asylum or refugee status, particularly as applications have risen following the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021.

"One of the first Afghan clients we took on in early 2021 worked with US forces in Afghanistan, and he had been attacked by the Taliban and was in real danger. We helped him through the application process, and he eventually got his green card to come here with his wife and kids," she says.

Callaghan and her colleagues later advised his sister on her asylum claim and went on to help his parents and three other siblings. The family now lives in the United States, and Callaghan and her family visit them for annual summer picnics, where all the kids—including his daughter and hers—play soccer together.

"They get to be regular people in their community and have friends and do the things that we all take for granted, and that's really cool," Callaghan says. "I get goosebumps just thinking about all of the people we support, whatever stage they are in their process. It's why we do this work collaboratively, innovatively, and thoughtfully—so that human beings can have a regular life that they like."

Derrelle Janey, '96: Digging into the Details of Health Care Claims

By Amy Crawford

Across the United States, health care fraud is a profitable, if illicit, business. And no state does it quite like California.

"Big picture, there is a crisis in the United States," says Derrelle Janey, '96, an experienced trial lawyer who recently joined Olshan Frome Wolosky LLP as a partner. "Similar to a lot of crises, there are hot zones around the country. And California is the hottest hot zone."

In part, that's because California is the most populous state, but it also offers unusually broad eligibility when it comes to the state's version of Medicaid. Meanwhile, new developments in the health care industry—specifically, telemedicine and the rise of third-party billing operations that can process claims in bulk—have made fraud even easier.

It's a problem, and one that the federal government has a clear interest in combating. Indeed, enforcing laws against health care fraud is now a major priority for the US Department of Justice. But, as a recent case of Janey's demonstrates, it's important for both sides to know the rules.

A wellspring of qui tam actions

Lifschutz v. Ghasseminejad involved what's known as a qui tam action, in which a private party brings a lawsuit on behalf of the government. In this case, a physician alleged that his patients had been fraudulently enrolled in hospice for the purposes of billing Medicaid. Under the federal False Claims Act, plaintiffs who bring qui tam actions can receive a share of any money recovered from people or companies that knowingly file false requests for payment to the government. In this case, that might have meant tens of millions of dollars.

With the government's recent focus on health care fraud, Janey says, "qui tam is exploding, and an entire wellspring of plaintiffs' lawyers has sprung up." Janey worries that some of them don't fully understand the burden of proof in fraud cases.

"How you draft the complaint becomes extremely important," says Janey, who defended Kaysan Ghasseminejad, who oversees a network of home hospice companies. "This is the piece that can be easy to miss—and certainly what the lawyers representing the plaintiff in *Lifschutz*, in my opinion, missed. A claim under the False Claims Act is a fraud claim. Under Rule 8 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, you just need to give a general account of what occurred. But because you're alleging fraud, Rule 9 applies."



In complex cases, including those alleging health care fraud, Derrelle Janey, '96, has seen the importance of following the rules of civil procedure.

Rule 9 imposes heightened requirements for certain allegations. Specifically, in fraud cases, 9(b) states, "a party must state with particularity the circumstances constituting fraud or mistake." That means offering what Janey calls "the newspaper account: the who, what, when, where, how" of the fraud, with great specificity.

Unfortunately for the *Lifschutz* plaintiff, his attorneys failed to meet that standard. A Central District of California judge cited Rule 9(b) and granted Janey's motion to dismiss the case earlier this year.

"This is a highly experienced judge saying that the federal rules, particularly Rule 9, actually matter when you draft these complaints," Janey says.

Staying the course

The rules of civil procedure are not exactly glamorous, he acknowledges. As a 1L at Michigan Law, he struggled to care about them himself—but Arthur R. Miller, his civil procedure professor, instilled in him that a deep understanding of the rules is critical to every persuasive argument.

It's a basic truth that every attorney needs to learn, he says, and one that he now fully appreciates because of his experience working complex cases. One RICO case involving pharmaceutical companies twisted and turned for eight years, he remembers. And then there was the high-profile insider-trading case involving the multilevel marketing company Herbalife and the billionaire hedge fund manager Bill Ackman.

"Working these cases can be a very physical, interactive, cerebral, cognitive exercise, and you can treat that intellectual process as building blocks over time, in the course of your career," he says. "When you've worked cases that big, that complicated, you can look at a complaint like *Lifschutz* and say, 'They're alleging fraud … and I don't think the plaintiffs really know that they're alleging fraud.'"



For the DEFENSE

How the Law School is shaping public defense in Michigan and across the country

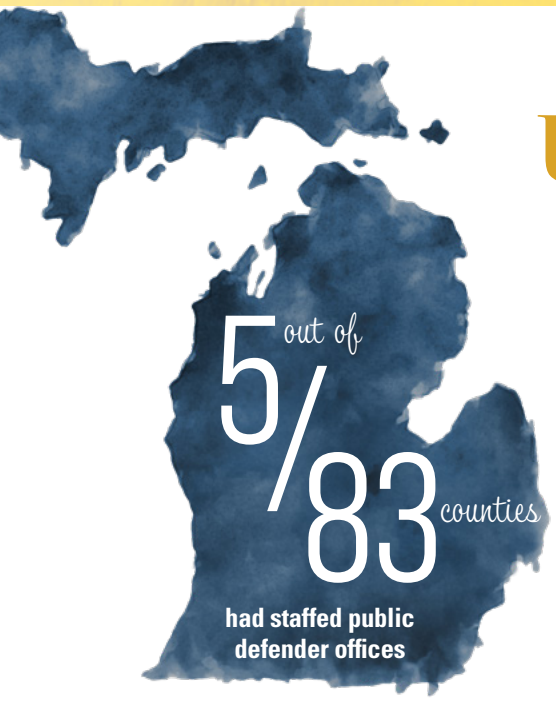
Twenty years ago, Michigan's indigent defense system was in shambles. But reforms beginning in the 2010s have made the state an unlikely leader, and Michigan Law faculty and alumni have been deeply involved in the transformation. Meanwhile, on campus and under the guidance of Professor Eve Brensike Primus, '01, the Law School is training the next generation of indigent defense lawyers in greater numbers than ever before—with an eye to being a model for law schools nationwide.



From a Mess to a Model

How Michigan Turned around Its System of Indigent Representation

BY BOB NEEDHAM



Up until 2015, the indigent defense system in Michigan was nothing short of a disaster.

The entire state—83 counties—had only five staffed public defender offices. Judges sometimes appointed their political donors to take cases, then encouraged them to have their clients plead guilty, often without even hearing the defendant's side.

Perhaps most tellingly, funding for indigent defense was among the lowest in the country. Cases often went to the lawyer offering the lowest bid for services—which only exacerbated problems of low pay and overwork for the people providing the services.

It was a mess, and none of it was a secret. However, a series of reforms enacted over the last 10 to 12 years has improved conditions dramatically—and the Michigan Law community has played a critical role in that progress.

THE PATH TO REFORM

1857 Michigan requires the appointment of paid counsel

1963 US Supreme Court decides *Gideon v. Wainwright*

2001 State task force creates Campaign for Justice to start advocating for reform

2006 State legislature authorizes a major study of Michigan's system of public defense

2007 ACLU of Michigan sues the state in *Duncan v. Michigan*

2008 Michigan's per-capita spending on indigent defense ranks 44th out of the 50 states

Michigan was ranked

44 out of **/50** states

in per-capita spending

A BROKEN SYSTEM OF PUBLIC DEFENSE

Michigan had never really lived up to the Sixth Amendment promise of a right to counsel for indigent defendants, reinforced by the US Supreme Court in 1963's *Gideon v. Wainwright*.

Although Michigan had been one of the first states to require the appointment of paid counsel, in 1857, that responsibility fell to individual counties. The Michigan system, such as it was, left each county to figure out public defense on its own—leading to an unreliable patchwork of poorly funded, poorly run setups.

Around 25 years ago, reform efforts slowly started to build. A state task force created by the Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency convened in 2001, and a group called the Campaign for Justice started advocating for reforms—without much success, at least initially.

Then two developments kick-started the process.

In 2006, the state legislature authorized a major study of Michigan's system of public defense. The report—titled a "A Race to the Bottom" and released in 2008 by the National Legal Aid and Defender Association—found that Michigan's per-capita spending on indigent defense ranked 44th out of the 50 states (and was 38 percent less than the national average).

The report's executive summary laid out the problems: "judges handpicking defense attorneys; lawyers appointed to cases for which they are unqualified; defenders meeting clients on the eve of trial and holding non-confidential discussions in public courtroom corridors; attorneys failing to identify obvious conflicts of interest; failure of defenders to properly prepare for trials or sentencings; attorneys violating their ethical canons to zealously advocate for clients; inadequate compensation for those appointed to defend the accused; and a lack of sufficient time, training, investigators, experts, and resources to properly prepare a case in the face of a state court system that values the speed with which cases are disposed of over the needs of clients for competent representation."

While that report was still being prepared, in 2007 the ACLU of Michigan sued the state in *Duncan v. Michigan*, seeking to reform the state's indigent defense system.

Professor from Practice Michael Steinberg, now director of the Civil Rights Litigation Initiative at the Law School, was working as the legal director of the state ACLU when the group decided to file its suit.

"It was clear that the Michigan indigent defense system was completely broken. For a year and a half, we tried to figure out a way to bring an impact case that would reform the system and draw attention to the problem," Steinberg says.



MICHAEL STEINBERG
Professor from Practice
Director, Civil Rights Litigation Initiative

2011 — State creates an indigent defense advisory commission

2013 — Advisory commission develops a proposed legislative package

2016 — MIDC works to roll out a series of statewide standards for indigent defense that each county can figure out how to meet

2017 — First four indigent defense standards are approved

2019 — A mandate for counsel to be present at arraignments is added

2025 — New caseload limits of 150 felonies and 400 misdemeanors a year go into effect

2026 — Legislation expands the MIDC's purview to include indigent juvenile defense



TIER 1
Trial court public defense

BLASE SCHMID KEARNEY, '11, "more or less grew up in a public defender office" in rural northern Michigan, where his mother worked as a secretary. Now a clinical professor at the University of Texas School of Law, Kearney initially worked for seven years at the Public Defender Service in Washington, DC, before returning to Michigan and the Neighborhood Defender Service in Detroit.

"All of our politicians and government officials take oaths to defend the Constitution. Public defenders are the ones who actually do it," Kearney says. "They're the ones who are in court every day defending the Constitution, fighting for freedom of people, and pushing to make sure that the ideals that the country was founded on are actually respected in court."

As a public defender, Kearney says that fewer than 5 percent of his cases ever got to the trial stage. He spent roughly half of his workday time in court, "talking to clients and trying to negotiate with prosecutors, having myriad off-the-record conversations with clerks and witnesses and judges and family members. And waiting for your case to be called."

The rest would be office time—meeting with supervisors, workshopping ideas with colleagues. He'd then typically do motion writing and prep work in the evenings.

"Trial-level state work is very much like putting fires out all the time," Kearney says. "The nature of the cases tends to be what you think of when you picture what a criminal defense attorney does.

"The timelines are very accelerated compared to federal trial work. And because the federal system has a much more punitive sentencing scheme than almost every state system, you find yourself actually going to trial a little bit more frequently."

Kearney continues, "I think that being a public defender is the best thing you can do with a law degree." Federal defender work and state appellate work, he says, are much more like each other than either of them is like state-level trial work. "If you are somebody who likes something brand new and exciting happening day to day that might stress other people out, then a state-level public defender is what you should be aiming for."

"We adopted a true integrated-advocacy approach. While the Campaign for Justice was working with the lawmakers and developing grassroots support for legislative reform, we applied pressure on the state through a lawsuit."

Building the lawsuit took a long time. The team—which included the national ACLU; the Brennan Center for Justice; and lawyers from Cravath, Swaine & Moore in New York—researched which counties to focus on, ultimately choosing Genesee, Muskegon, and Berrien. They watched how the courts treated indigent defendants and collected individual defendants' stories.

The state filed a motion to dismiss the case, but the ACLU won at the trial level, at the Court of Appeals, and finally at the Michigan Supreme Court. The case went through an initial Supreme Court ruling in favor of the plaintiffs, then a reversal, and finally a reversal of the reversal. "It was unheard of," Steinberg says.

The case went back to the trial court. Yet before it got much further, the state government—driven by the lawsuit and the "Race to the Bottom" report—finally acted on the issue, which was the ultimate goal all along. The ACLU dismissed its case.

In 2011, the state created an indigent defense advisory commission appointed by Gov. Rick Snyder, '82. Ann Arbor attorney John Shea, '82, who had been part of the Campaign for Justice, also served on the advisory commission.

"Snyder had said, 'Let's take control. It's a problem, and we should figure it out,'" Shea recalls. The advisory commission developed a proposed legislative package—which the legislature approved, mostly intact and with bipartisan support, in 2013.

That law created the permanent Michigan Indigent Defense Commission (MIDC) as well as a statewide funding structure for the new system. Finally, the machinery was in place for real change.

MAJOR CHANGES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Shea was appointed to the MIDC in 2016, as the group worked to roll out a series of statewide standards for indigent defense that each county could figure out how to meet. The standards took the American Bar Association's principles for public defense as a starting point but adapted them to Michigan's unique needs.

"We identified what the standards should be, and then we identified in what order we wanted to roll them out," Shea says. "We knew we couldn't hit the legislature with a choking amount of funding. If we started with better pay or caseload limits, there would have been a big price tag. So we started with training standards."

As the commission introduced each standard, individual counties proposed their compliance plans. Once the commission approved the plans—sometimes after substantial revisions—they were included in funding requests to the state.

"Then we started rolling out other standards, like judicial independence," Shea says. "The judges shouldn't be picking the lawyers. There has to be an independent way of assigning the lawyers. Otherwise, the system gets corrupted."

The first four indigent defense standards were approved in 2017; since then, five more have been added. They cover things like training and education, use of investigation and experts, independence from the judiciary, qualification and review of attorneys in adult criminal cases, and attorney compensation.

MIDC Executive Director Kristen Staley says before the state introduced standards, only one court in the state—Ingham County District Court in Mason, near Lansing—had counsel present at arraignments. A mandate for counsel to be present started in 2019, and by 2021 all courts were compliant.

The newest standard—caseload limits of 150 felonies and 400 misdemeanors a year—went into effect in 2025. Compliance efforts have received growing funding from the state as new standards have been introduced: from $82 million in FY19 to $211 million for the coming year.

Along the way, the number of full-time public defender offices in the state has grown from five to more than 30. "The counties have become professional," Shea says. "They've hired professional people to put these compliance plans together and administer the programs. The system really is reformed. It's not perfect by any means, but it is significantly better."



Growing funding from the state as new standards have been introduced

$82M in FY19 to $112M in FY26

> The system really is reformed. It's not perfect by any means, but it is significantly better.

JOHN SHEA, '82
Michigan Indigent Defense Commission



TIER 2
State Appellate Defender Office

EMMA LAWTON, '15, did trial work before moving to her current role with Michigan's State Appellate Defender Office (SADO) in 2022. Her interest in public defense dates back to work with the Michigan Innocence Clinic during her 1L summer.

Lawton believes full-time public defender offices are critical for a functioning legal system. "You can brainstorm and track patterns and identify issues that really need to be worked on in a particular community," she says. "You are better equipped to implement that systemic change. It elevates the defense practice in that community."

At SADO, she typically has two types of days: either working on cases—reading briefs, writing to clients, conducting video visits, doing research—or appearing in court. "I have days where I feel like I'm a trial attorney; I'm back in trial court, arguing a motion or having an evidentiary hearing," she says. "Then there's traditional appellate court stuff, conducting oral argument."

Lawton says the pace of appellate work is quite different from trial work. "Trial court was very active; you're always juggling a lot of balls all at once. Most of my clients were usually not in custody, so I might be trying to help them find housing or getting to know their families," she says.

"Now, on the appeals side, the activity has slowed down. My clients are mostly in custody. You tend to get to know more of the person. It feels a little bit more like a partnership. It's a much slower, longer development of a relationship."

She also noted that trial work has the potential for more small wins along the way, while appellate work has a longer horizon: "There are these long stretches where there's nothing at all. You have to count on the occasional really big win to sustain you through everything else."

Those who work in the system have seen the results.

Shea notes that the vast majority of criminal cases, around 95 percent, end up in a plea deal. "If you are a lousy plea advocate and sentencing advocate, people are getting over-convicted and over-punished. If you're a good plea advocate and sentencing advocate, clients are getting convicted of things that are more fair and getting sentences that are more fair," he says.

Since the State of Michigan implemented its reforms, "in many cases, average sentences are down, and that's a direct result of better sentencing advocacy and better deal cutting," he says. "Done properly, over time, that can cover the cost of an indigent defense system, because the state saves money on corrections costs.

"There are also human outcomes. Having counsel at first appearance can get people out on bond, when previously they would've been lodged—and lost their job, maybe gotten evicted, maybe had a problem with Child Protective Services because they're living out of their car. Those human outcomes are real."

Tracey Brame, '95, was appointed to the MIDC in 2019 and later reappointed. In January 2026, Brame—who also serves as associate dean of experiential learning and practice preparation at Cooley Law School—assumed the role of MIDC chairperson.

She has seen the results firsthand—"cases being dismissed, trials being won, client satisfaction being greater"—since the state implemented its reforms.

"But also, attorney satisfaction has improved," she says. "Attorneys feel as though they can make a decent living doing this work, instead of doing it for a couple of years and then saying, 'There's just no way I can continue to do this.' You get better representation and more longevity."

EXTENDING THE REACH OF REFORMS

With the core standards now in place, the MIDC's work has shifted focus. MIDC staff handle more than 100 proposals each year for programs that counties want to fund, and the commission has final say in those grants.

"Much of our work now focuses on the local systems around the state," Brame says. "We funnel resources to local systems to help them meet the standards."

The MIDC also coordinates with local systems on providing continuing legal education for indigent defense, which is now an annual requirement, Brame adds. Commissioners also discuss any problems that may arise in the system.

The biggest looming issue involves juvenile justice. In July 2026, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed legislation expanding the MIDC's purview to include indigent juvenile defense.

"Now we're going to do the same thing for juveniles in trial court that we've done for adults," Brame says. "We're going to implement standards. We're going to monitor the adherence to those standards. We're going to have a budget.

"I don't yet know just what that's going to look like, but it's super exciting. It's something that we've been working toward for the last couple of years, because we have the same issues at the juvenile level as at the adult level—resources and continuity and consistency. Now we get to work on that."



MIRA EDMONDS
Clinical Professor of Law
Director, Juvenile Justice Clinic

Mira Edmonds, clinical professor of law and director of the Juvenile Justice Clinic, welcomes the new development. "It's overdue," she says. The MIDC has expressed interest in working with the clinic on developing the new standards.

Better funding will also be critical, Edmonds adds. Currently, juvenile defenders in many counties are paid only $125 per court appearance.

"There's simply no way that a person can



> Now we're going to do the same thing for juveniles in trial court that we've done for adults.

TRACEY BRAME, '95
Michigan Indigent Defense Commission Chairperson



TIER 3
Federal Community Defender Office

Inspired by visiting professor James Forman's work with the Public Defender Service in Washington, DC, **BRANDY ROBINSON, '03**, interned for the organization and "was blown away at the level of excellence and passion." Now, she carries that energy forward leading the Federal Community Defender office in Detroit, which she first joined in 2012. Her office represents indigent defendants in US District Court, the US Court of Appeals, and the Supreme Court.

"America's constitutional promises are lofty and noble, and they represent the best of who we aspire to be," Robinson says. "It is a frightening experience to be charged with a crime by the United States of America. To make sure the government's enormous power doesn't crush its people, we must equip appointed counsel with strong training and resources. It's really about making sure that our nation stays true to its core principles."

Robinson's workdays might include meeting with clients, reviewing discovery, doing research, consulting with colleagues, and considering potential conflicts of interest in the office's cases—as well as administrative work like payroll and discussing bigger issues in the system.

Robinson helped establish the Neighborhood Defender Service in Detroit, and she says state cases tend to be faster paced than federal. "In the federal system, you might have fewer cases, but they are far more complex," she says.

Procedures can be quite different. For example, instead of a preliminary examination in open court, the federal system uses a closed grand jury indictment process, she adds. In addition, rules for what the government has to disclose are more limited at the federal level, and penalties for similar offenses are much harsher.

"It's wonderful work," Robinson says. "It can be heavy, it can be challenging, but because the need is so great, it's also very rewarding. I'm happy to see my alma mater supporting students who are dedicated to this area of the law. Their work will make a difference and is worth the investment."

adequately represent a youth at that pay scale. The lawyers literally can't afford to spend more than an hour prepping for those appearances, and that is not really providing competent legal counsel," she says.

The Juvenile Justice Clinic is in the midst of a pilot program, funded by a state grant, that could inform the MIDC's work on juvenile defense. Under the program, a social worker gives support to clinic students, clients, and families and also provides training, consultations, and referrals to juvenile defenders around the state. The clinic is just starting to gather data to gauge its effectiveness.

"We are hoping that one of the things that this project will demonstrate is that particularly for kids, you really can't solve the problem that involvement with the delinquency system represents without looking at the root causes—such as neglect and abuse, entrenched poverty, mental health challenges, and inadequate educational opportunities," Edmonds says. "I'm hoping that we'll be able to produce data that will show how much of a positive impact a social worker integrated as part of the defense team can make on the quality of representation."



MAKING MICHIGAN A MODEL

Even as the commission begins to work on the juvenile defense system, other big topics remain to be addressed. Some in the system are seeking lower caseload standards. Funding will likely remain a concern, given the unpredictable nature of politics and the state budget process.

"The Michigan Legislature has been fantastic about making sure that we have the funds that we need in order to make this happen," Brame says. "Long-term, I'd like to see us get to a point where our work is a given and we don't have to justify it each year."

Another issue is the varying quality of representation from one location to another.

"We have lawyer deserts in Michigan," Shea says. "We have parts of Michigan where you don't have a vibrant defense bar. Getting coverage in parts of the northern Lower Peninsula and in parts of the Upper Peninsula is a real challenge."

Eve Primus, '01—the Yale Kamisar Professor of Law, director of the MDefenders program, and director of the Public Defender Training Institute at Michigan Law—says that more public defenders are critical.

"It is still the case that the majority of people in Michigan who are accused of crimes and who don't have the money to afford a lawyer are not going to get a full-time public defender," she says. "There has been amazing growth in Michigan in the last 10 years, but we're really just at the tip of the iceberg of where we need to go."

Brame aims to expand the pipeline of attorneys by making Michigan "known as a destination for public defense," she says. "I want law students around the country to think, 'The MIDC has this system in Michigan, and we want to go practice criminal defense in Michigan because we know that they practice in excellence.'"



EVE PRIMUS, '01
Yale Kamisar Professor of Law
Director of the MDefenders program
Director of the Public Defender Training Institute at Michigan Law

Primus notes that many states have a long way to go to get to a point where they are providing constitutionally effective representation. "Nationally, we have a crisis in indigent defense. We don't have enough lawyers, and we're killing the lawyers we do have with excessive caseloads," Primus says.

"Many people around the country are looking to Michigan as an example of what to do to reform loosely organized, county-based indigent defense delivery systems that are in shambles. We've come a long way, and others look to Michigan now as a model."

MDefenders

Supports, Empowers Aspiring Public Defenders

BY ALLISON TORRES BURTKA

For Michigan Law students who are interested in becoming public defenders, MDefenders offers a robust community and a network of specialized courses and other resources to prepare them.

MDefenders grew out of "the desire to open people's eyes to what indigent defense is really like and why it's important, and the desire to provide community for people who want to go into this work," says Eve Brensike Primus, '01, founder and director of MDefenders, and the Yale Kamisar Collegiate Professor of Law.

Before creating MDefenders, Primus says that among students she had taught, "I saw a little bit of shell shock about the real practice of being a public defender." She wanted to give them an honest look at what it's like to work in these under-resourced and overburdened systems.



MDefenders began as a faculty-sponsored student organization in 2014 and later expanded to include an on-campus interviewing and career services arm and an alumni network. Then Primus added a curricular component and, most recently, a data partnership.

"MDefenders was a big part of the reason that I chose Michigan Law," says 3L Jace Longenecker. "They have an excellent reputation for preparation for public defense work, and the community is one of the largest and most active at any law school in the country."

Michigan Law students interested in public defense learn from participating in the Law School's criminal defense clinics. And, while other law schools have criminal defense clinics, trial advocacy classes, and other programs, MDefenders' combination of offerings is unique. "It is a level of support above and beyond that," Primus says.

It equips students with the hard and soft skills they'll need, and it gives them confidence and perspective, she says.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

In the beginning, Primus had noticed that Michigan Law had a community of students who were interested in doing public defender or criminal legal system reform work, but they weren't very well connected to each other.

Now, the MDefenders community meets regularly for discussion and information sessions.

For Alanna Autler, '23, staff attorney with the Neighborhood Defender Service in Detroit, MDefenders was the first place she found people who shared her feelings about the criminal legal system. Before law school, she says, "I encountered few people who shared my same beliefs about how unjust the system is and about how unfairly clients are treated. For the first time in my adult life, I was able to find that kind of community in MDefenders."

Autler adds, "It was an accepting, welcoming community, and that can mean a lot in an environment like law school, which can sometimes be harsh and competitive."

MDefenders includes a network of more than 450 alumni who support each other and current students in finding positions and sharing resources. The alumni directory is available to current students, so they can contact alumni directly.

Longenecker says he recently called an alum who works at an office he's considering applying to. "They were so generous with their time to describe, honestly, the vibe of the office, their workload, their experiences there, and how they think I would like it," he says.

MDefenders hosts regular alumni events, where alumni can hear from their peers about emerging issues, such as surveillance technologies powered by artificial intelligence, and how they might tackle them in their own jurisdictions, Autler says. "There are so many policing advancements that are affecting clients nationwide, and it's helpful to know that we are not alone in facing these issues."

CAREER RESOURCES

The interview process for public defender offices is not standard, and it can catch students off guard, Primus says. "It often involves complex ethical hypotheticals or simulated court arguments. It's not your standard 'walk in and talk about your resume' interview."

To help students through this process, Primus developed a career resources and mentorship program. First- and second-year students who want summer jobs related to indigent defense receive mentorship from 3Ls and alumni when drafting their cover letters and resumes. For 3Ls, Primus meets one on one with each student who is interested in applying for a public defender job. She talks through what type of indigent defense they are hoping to practice, reviews their resumes and cover letters, and does mock interviews.

Students have access to toolkits on what questions to ask to figure out whether an office is the right fit, and how to investigate the culture of an office, for example.

> The Public Defender Training Institute taught me everything, soup to nuts, when it comes to trial work, as well as what it takes to build a meaningful rapport with clients, many of whom have every reason to distrust us right off the bat.
>
> ALANNA AUTLER, '23



PUBLIC DEFENDER TRAINING INSTITUTE

~10%

of current students are involved in MDefenders

400+

Alumni in the Michigan Law public defense network

Now in its eighth year, the Public Defender Training Institute (PDTI) is a course for 3Ls. "It's a yearlong immersion into the world of public defender training. It's designed to make them zealous, client-centered advocates," Primus says.

Students learn how to interview a client and how to argue motions, for example, and they participate in practice simulations. "Students experience what it's like to be a public defender in a courtroom. There are going to be judges who yell at you and pressure you to give in," Primus explains.

The course is taught by Michigan Law faculty who are current or former public defenders and aided by MDefenders alumni. Enrollment is capped at 16 students so that all students have sufficient time to participate in the simulations.

Every week, the students work in pairs, and the pairs rotate. "They work with everyone in the institute, and it becomes like a little family for that year," Primus says.

PDTI students talk through difficult issues, such as how to represent a neo-Nazi and how to handle emotionally difficult charges like rape and child sexual abuse. Also, Primus says, "We talk about how you fight to change a racist and oppressive system when you're a cog in the wheel of that very system."

The curriculum also covers self-care and secondary trauma. "How do you deal with the toll that this job will take on your emotional and psychological well-being? It is hard to be in a room day in and day out as people are ripped from their communities and put into cages," Primus says.

Autler was a student in PDTI during the 2022–2023 academic year. "It taught me everything, soup to nuts, when it comes to trial work, as well as what it takes to build a meaningful rapport with clients, many of whom have every reason to distrust us right off the bat," she says.

For public defenders to tell their clients' stories, gaining their trust is essential, Autler says. "When we get the case, the file is a snapshot in time. PDTI really emphasized that we're looking at the client's life as a whole in order to get them justice. That's what's going to convince judges, juries, and sometimes even prosecutors to listen to what we have to say."

Autler returned to PDTI in 2025 to help with an exercise in arguing motions. "I had only been practicing for two years at that point, but the kinds of motions that we were practicing, that's part of my everyday job now. So it really hit home that what they're learning at PDTI is going to be used on a daily basis."

Brandy Robinson, '03, also comes back to Ann Arbor to assist with PDTI. As the head of the Federal Community Defender Office in Detroit, she knows its value. "Many jurisdictions lack the time and resources to train new defenders adequately. A supervisor might drop 50 files on your desk and say, 'Go,' and suddenly you're learning on the job," she says.

"But goodness, those are people's lives," Robinson says. The way that PDTI equips students "with the practical skills they need to hit the ground running is priceless."

Part of the institute is an intensive three-day retreat before classes start. Before the group spends a year together, "there needs to be a level of trust and understanding," Primus says.

"The retreat is foundational to the entire program," and it focuses on the fundamentals of being a public defender, Primus says. They talk about: What is a public defender? What draws you to this work? What are the difficult things about it? What are the wonderful things about it?

Blase Schmid Kearney, '11, a clinical professor at the University of Texas at Austin School of Law and a former public defender, comes back to Michigan Law to help facilitate PDTI.

The retreat's focus on storytelling skills, he says, "helps law students understand from the beginning that it is how people are made to feel, not logical arguments, that is driving whether or not you can be successful in this line of work as a public defender. That is a lesson that took me a while to learn."

PDTI didn't exist when Kearney was a law student, but he says he benefits from being part of it now. "When you get disillusioned with the institutions and the bureaucracies that you spend your time working inside of, it is rejuvenating to once a year sit with people who have so much heart and fire and so much drive to do the things that I want to do, too."

DATA FOR DEFENDERS

"There's been an explosion in data collection and social science research in the last 20 years about how actors within the criminal legal system operate and how the system operates," Primus says. "That research provides fodder for amazing advocacy by public defenders, but a lot of lawyers aren't trained to look for social science research when thinking about their advocacy." To help bridge that gap, Primus created the Data for Defenders project, a public database of resources that public defenders across the country can draw from.

"The goal is to help incorporate cutting-edge social science research and data into criminal defense pleadings," Primus says. The project includes more than 20 public defender organizations and agency partners around the country that contribute pleadings to the database.

Michigan Law students create model pleadings as well. "I work with students to develop their written advocacy and incorporate social science into their advocacy. We find relevant social science research and transform it into national defense motion templates that our partner offices around the country can use in court," Primus says.



Professor Eve Brensike Primus, '01, at an MDefenders meeting in fall 2026. Through the new MDefenders Center for Public Defense, Primus wants Michigan Law to be a model for other law schools nationwide.

The motions include data about things like the science of eyewitness memory, incorporating intellectual disabilities into legal advocacy, and research about drug detection dogs.

A BROAD REACH

About 10 percent of Michigan Law students are involved in MDefenders in some way, Primus says, and 20 to 30 Michigan Law graduates go into indigent defense every year—a number that has grown annually since MDefenders was founded.

Some students, like Longenecker, choose Michigan Law because of MDefenders. Others are interested in some form of public interest work, find MDefenders, and decide to pursue indigent defense.

As MDefenders has grown over the past 12 years, PDTI's earliest graduates are now in management positions in public defender offices, Primus says. They are incorporating lessons learned from MDefenders into their training programs for the next generation.

A newly announced grant from the University's Strategic Initiative Fund will allow MDefenders to expand through the creation of the MDefenders Center for Public Defense. The center will serve as a national training platform for zealous, client-centered public defense advocacy; convene scholars, lawyers, and policymakers to improve and advance public defender systems; and equip other law schools to replicate the MDefenders model.

The new center will also expand curricular offerings to include more simulation-based courses like PDTI, and a partnership with U-M's School of Social Work will prepare students to address client trauma, manage secondary trauma, and sustain long-term public service careers.

Primus says, "It's exciting to be able to expand the training and support that we provide to students and alumni through MDefenders, while creating resources, partnerships, and programs that support defenders and strengthen public defense systems nationwide."

30+

states where Michigan Law alumni work in public defense

The Last Line of Defense

Across the country, Michigan Law alumni who work as public defenders and practice indigent defense provide vital legal service to those who need it most. Here, *Law Quadrangle* shares some of their stories.

I started my career as a public defender at the Bronx Defenders before founding Still She Rises in 2016. We are a completely pro bono firm that offers free legal representation to North Tulsa mothers facing attacks on their freedom or family unity.

The mothers we represent are blamed for their poverty as a moral failing. Their behavior as survivors of domestic violence is scrutinized and compared to an imaginary perfect victim. Their conduct as women who stand up for themselves is labeled as aggressive. Our use of a holistic defense model is crucial because our clients' priorities are often self-sacrificial and complex.

The joy of this work for me has been in diving into the complexity of those issues and developing innovative and effective ways of working as a team to defend our clients.



KRISTINA SALEH, '10
Founding attorney and director of strategic initiatives, Still She Rises

WORKING AS A CAPITAL HABEAS LAWYER is challenging for a few reasons. The first that comes to mind is the length and complexity of client relationships in capital habeas work. Capital habeas lawyers typically enter the picture years after a client's trial and appeal have concluded, and after the shock of their situation has waned. A lot of work goes into building a relationship with clients whose previous attorneys failed to prevent the worst from happening. These relationships require patience, consistency, and grace to navigate the large record and to grapple with previous dynamics. The relationship is a crucial precursor to the broader tasks of the job, which include litigating the constitutionality of your client's conviction and sentence, challenging the legality of the state's execution method, and advocating for compassion at clemency.

Another challenge with death penalty post-conviction cases is the daunting size and scope of the task. These cases require counsel to develop a deep understanding not only of what happened in the trial, sentencing, appeal, and any precursor post-conviction proceedings below, but also of what should have happened but didn't. It requires deep investigation of the unexplored areas of a client's life, and of the work and lives of those who touched their case along the way.

I became a public defender because I believe a system that values pain and punishment above all else in the name of accountability misses the incredible capacity we have as humans to atone, account for, and amend, and because such a system blinds itself to the harm it doles out on the family, friends, and community of the person it punishes. I am honored to be one of many defenders who help the courts, the jury, and the public see the whole person behind the word defendant. It is the only harm-reduction and dignity-affirming mechanism we have.

ASHLYN ANGELL, '19
Assistant federal defender, Western District of North Carolina, capital habeas unit for the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals

I think the best way to summarize why I do this work is that I have the honor and privilege of representing someone at what is often the lowest point of their life. Nothing makes me prouder than to hear a client tell me they're happy with the way I told their story—whether it was at closing arguments or sentencing, or to the government during plea negotiations.

TEZIRA ABE, '20
Assistant federal defender, Washington DC Office of the Federal Public Defender, trial division

While all public defenders face a lack of resources, our rural community has a severe lack of basic resources for our clients. We have no public transportation whatsoever, but our district courthouse and the detention center are a 45-minute drive down the mountain from the county's main population center. Many clients become stranded upon release; it isn't feasible for our office to transport every client, and it is especially heartbreaking when clients are forced to walk 10-plus hours because they have no other option. We also have no shelters or emergency housing in the county, nor any detox or substance use treatment centers.

Another challenge in rural New Mexico is that there are just not enough attorneys in the state to support the need for legal representation here. As a result, we are opening up limited positions for full-time remote attorney work in specific jurisdictions.

I first witnessed the immense amount of suffering in the system when I interned for the ACLU of Utah in college. Once you see what is happening on a daily basis, how can you do any other type of work?



RACHAEL SUTHERLAND, '21
Managing attorney, Law Office of the Public Defender of New Mexico, Ruidoso office

IN OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE spent more than three decades striking Black and Jewish jurors from capital cases. Attorneys first raised the claim in 2003, but a massive cover-up buried it until 2024, when I obtained proof. With the help of a federal judge who had fidelity to the Constitution, over the next year we saw 20 men get off of death row, with five going home.

I had represented one of the five for 11 years and another for two years, and was lucky enough to be appointed as co-settlement counsel for many of the others. I spent more than a decade banging my head against a brick wall before the wall broke. I knew there was a conspiracy—lots of people did—but it took more than two decades of persistence to unearth it enough to inspire action.

I wear the Block M with pride. We were Clarence Darrow's law school, and now we have MDefenders (started by Professor Eve Brensike Primus, who was in the criminal clinic with me in law school). At a time when most top 14 law schools push their students toward firms, Michigan has a comprehensive push toward indigent defense. That is uniquely amazing.

Indigent defense is a calling. The best of those who do it are warriors and pirates, fighting a system that repeatedly changes the rules for its own benefit. The deck is stacked, David vs. Goliath, literally us against a superpower, which is why it takes the best of the best to find ways to win, but we do. They change the rules and we get more creative, more brilliant. That is devotion. There are easier law jobs—almost all of them are—but none more rewarding.

BRIAN POMERANTZ, '00
Capital habeas attorney, Law Offices of Brian M. Pomerantz



Shoring Up Democracy

Heather Gerken, ’94, Leads the Ford Foundation’s Work to Strengthen Democracy and the Rule of Law

BY ALLISON TORRES BURTKA

Democracy is unfinished work, says Heather Gerken, ’94, who became the Ford Foundation’s eleventh president in November 2025. Sometimes people take democracy for granted, as an established system, but it requires people to protect it.

In the United States and around the world, “some of the basic building blocks of democracies are being eroded and attacked,” Gerken says. In April, she announced that the Ford Foundation is investing an additional $60 million in new grants to defend the rule of law, fortify voting rights, and boost civic participation.

No matter what issues people care about, “Everything depends on the rule of law being upheld and on having free and fair elections,” Gerken says.

Gerken took the helm at the Ford Foundation after serving as Yale Law School’s dean for eight years. Throughout her career, she has pushed to protect and strengthen democracy and the rule of law—and to prepare lawyers to do this work.

Gerken’s interest in voting rights goes back to her days at Michigan Law, where she took the Law School’s first election law course. The professor was Richard Pildes, who became Gerken’s mentor. “He was one of the founders of the field, and that course changed my life forever,” she says. In the ’90s, her first work as a lawyer was handling voting rights cases.

In 2012, Gerken published *The Democracy Index* (Princeton University Press), which proposed a system that would rate the performance of state and local election procedures. In 2013, the Pew Charitable Trusts adopted her proposal into the nation’s first Election Performance Index, and election administrators used it to revamp their systems.

“Election administrators are under enormous pressure in this polarized moment,” Gerken says. “The pressure to change a rule, bend a rule, find votes—those are things that should never be asked of election administrators. We should just allow them to count the votes.”

Gerken adds, “Election administrators are our neighbors. These are the everyday people who make our democracy possible.”

The Ford Foundation’s new grants support nonpartisan and bipartisan nonprofits and veterans organizations such as Campaign Legal Center, Veterans for All Voters, and Pillars of the Community.

Strengthening democratic values is built into the Ford Foundation’s mission, Gerken says. It has a history of supporting social justice and civil rights, and “it built the backbone of public interest law. It’s the reason legal clinics exist, because it seeded them across the United States,” she adds.

AN OBLIGATION FOR LAWYERS AND LAW SCHOOLS

Although the rule of law is under attack, lawyers agree on the rule of law and basic democratic norms, Gerken says. “Lawyers understand that there are these bedrock principles about which there is no debate, even among the group that can debate anything,” she says. “Those are the things that are left standing after the most argumentative people on the planet spent a century arguing about them.”

Lawyers and law schools are well positioned to do democracy's unfinished work. Gerken is a former member of the ABA Task Force for American Democracy, a bipartisan group of experts in law, public administration, and politics that works to improve public trust in the election system and support the rule of law.

In 2024, the task force published a letter highlighting law schools' role in supporting constitutional democracy. "I'm really proud to say that I was part of a small group of deans who helped organize a statement by almost all the deans across the United States in the wake of January 6th to talk about the importance of the rule of law," she says.

As law schools prepare people to serve as lawyers, legal clinics are essential, Gerken says. "I do not think that anyone should graduate from a law school without having used the skills that they've been given."

Clinics teach students to serve real people with real problems in real time, she says. "That is the moral obligation you have when you are lucky enough to be able to go to law school."

KICKING OPEN THE DOORS

Gerken became the first female dean of Yale Law School in 2017. During her eight years as dean, she says, "The way I saw it, my job was to kick open the doors of legal education."

Under Gerken's leadership, Yale Law School—which had always based financial aid entirely on need—significantly boosted the amount of need-based financial aid it offered, including launching its first full-tuition scholarships for students from low-income households. "We went from a fairly small percentage of students who came from just below or above the poverty line to 15 percent of the class, and it continues to increase," she says.

"When we started bringing in students who came from below the poverty line, it quickly became clear that they don't experience debt as an individual matter. They experience it as a family matter, and they were never going to put another dollar of debt on their family's shoulders," Gerken says. "These students don't have a safety net. They are the safety net for their own families."

Yale also admitted more students who were the first in their families to attend college, and it increased the number of veterans from 1 percent to 10 percent.

Gerken sees access to law school as an issue of fairness and justice. "Lawyers are at the table for so many important things, and if you don't have different types of people represented at the table, you're making a mistake," she says.

Since *U.S. News & World Report* first established its law school rankings, Yale had been listed as the number-one school every year. But those rankings discouraged law schools from providing need-based aid by incentivizing them to give it to students with the highest academic scores instead, Gerken explains.

"The *U.S. News & World Report* rankings are the reason why so many deans took money away from the needs-based scholarship bucket and put it into what they call merit-based," she says. "They were just competing for numbers."

In 2022, Gerken pulled Yale Law School out of the rankings. It was the first, but more than 60 schools followed , including Michigan. "One dean after another read that we had dropped out and did the same immediately, because they all knew how pernicious the *U.S. News* rankings were," she says.

At the time, statistics showed that roughly 85 percent of students who received financial aid didn't have to show any financial need, Gerken says. "That is not a way to open up the legal system. So we did everything we could to change that."

The rankings also discouraged law schools from supporting public interest careers, Gerken says.

"This is the magic of being a dean of a law school: You're basically training the next generation of lawyers and leaders," she says. "You have to think not just about the basic knowledge that they need to have but the deep ethical principles that they need to have."

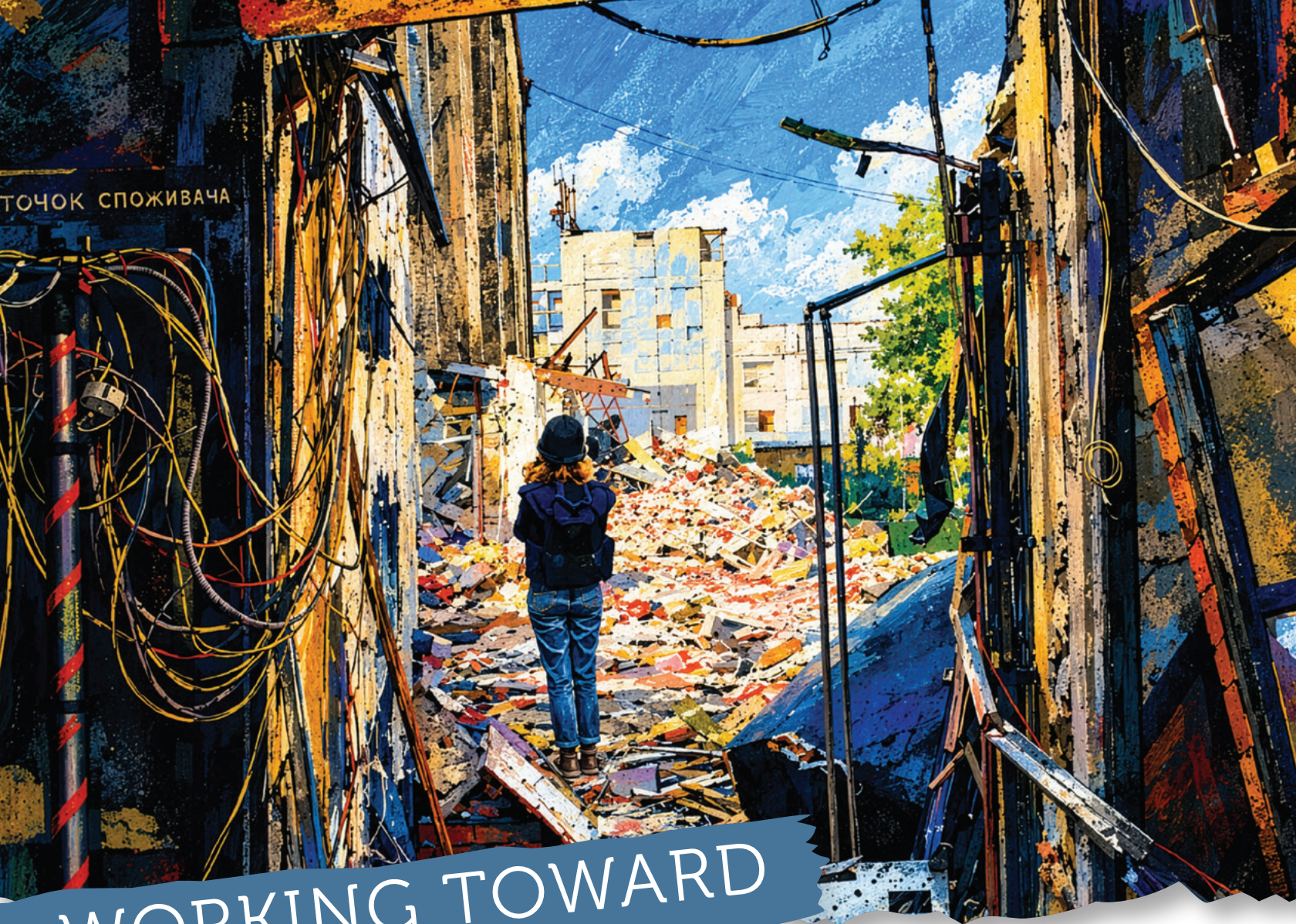
Gerken's commitment to democracy and the rule of law runs deep. "I've worked all of my life on these issues—on thinking about how a democracy should work and on protecting voting rights," as a lawyer, professor, and dean, she says. "All of that work informed the work that I'm doing at the Ford Foundation, and it really does date back to the extraordinary education I got at Michigan."

> *"Everything depends on the rule of law being upheld and on having free and fair elections.*
>
> HEATHER GERKEN, '94



Heather Gerken, '94, meets with a group of IL students at Yale Law School, where she served as dean for eight years.

Photo courtesy of Yale Law School



WORKING TOWARD

JUSTICE in Ukraine

Michigan Law Students and Alumni Help Advance the Work of the Nonprofit Truth Hounds

By Allison Torres Burtka



Evan Harary, '21, first went to Ukraine as a Fulbright scholar in 2021, but when Russia launched a full-scale invasion in 2022, his time in Ukraine was cut short.

"I lived in a city that became the front line. All of my friends and colleagues had to evacuate or fight," Harary says. He evacuated across the border to Poland and helped friends do the same.

"When the full-scale invasion started, I saw many people whose lives were turned upside down in a day. These things stuck with me when I came home," he says. Back in the United States, as the war intensified, he felt compelled to go back and help however he could.

Now, Harary works full time as legal counsel for the Kyiv-based nonprofit Truth Hounds, which documents and investigates war crimes and human rights violations. He had connected with the organization's now co-executive director in Ukraine and they had stayed in touch after Harary returned to the United States.

Along with Harary, two other Michigan Law students have been working with Truth Hounds since the 2022 invasion. Dmytro Soldatenko, LLM '25, is an SJD student at Michigan Law and works with the organization as an independent legal consultant. 2L Stephen Costello spent his summer internship with the organization in Ukraine.

All three were moved to contribute in some way to helping people affected by the conflict.

"We're bringing to light difficult topics, on the initiative of victims, because there are things we investigate that our victims really want publicized," Harary says. "We do what we can to try and get some form of accountability for serious violations of international law, and also publicity, so people understand the issues as they really are."

Harary's Fulbright scholarship work focused on populations that have no documentation of their citizenship. "It's quite common with people born in the temporarily occupied territories or from marginalized communities," he says.

When he decided to return to Ukraine, he reached out to Truth Hounds. "With the help of Michigan Law's Bates Fellowship, and the huge help of the Center for International and Comparative Law, I was able to do a fellowship, and then that turned into a full-time job," he says. Harary received the Clara Belfield and Henry Bates Overseas Fellowship in 2024.

Harary has been working with Truth Hounds for two years. The organization's team of documenters collects testimonies, physical evidence, and documentary evidence, and Harary helps analyze this information for case building and for public reports. He is based in Warsaw, Poland, and goes to Ukraine every month or two.

Truth Hounds has worked with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, established by the UN Human Rights Council. "We do the first-instance documentation, investigation, and analysis, and package it in a way so it's digestible and it can be presented at the international level and in courts," Harary says.

The organization publishes reports on specific issues, such as the effects of attacks on health care. These attacks included clinical settings and other settings with vulnerable populations, and that report showed how these attacks "are degrading the capacity of Ukrainian people, health care workers, and people with illnesses to take care of themselves and others," says Harary.

"The report brought to light how brutal these attacks are," and how they've harmed elderly people and people with limited mobility, Harary says. "They're not just 'infrastructure attacks.'"

Harary also contributed to a public report on first person view (FPV) drone attacks, which are a relatively new tactic, he says. "We focus on the resilience of civilians who are in this impossible situation, where they're being hunted by drone operators and followed around for training purposes."



Dmytro Soldatenko, LLM '25, at the Lviv National Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre in Lviv, Ukraine. Soldatenko is an SJD student at Michigan Law and works with Truth Hounds as an independent legal consultant.

Harary says about the drones, "Our research team learned about how civilians cope with this and how they respond and protect themselves and their families—and are able to live some semblance of life even under this very intense pressure."

Truth Hounds also trains judges, prosecutors, and investigators, often in partnership with other organizations in Ukraine and internationally.

This work is important for many reasons, Harary says, but especially "for the survivors, so that they feel like they're not just yelling into the void, but there are people who care and who will do everything they can with the forums available to pursue accountability."

Keeping a record is important so that "when people look back and they think about what actually happened, there can be minimal dispute, and we can honor these people's stories by making sure that their stories make it into the histories written about the conflict," Harary says.

Opposite page: A Truth Hounds documenter works in the field to gather witness testimony and photographic evidence.

An internship in Kyiv

Costello, who worked as a legal intern at Truth Hounds over the summer, first learned about the organization when one of its directors participated in a panel at Michigan Law on the international law questions surrounding the contemplated peace arrangement for the Ukraine war.

When Russia invaded Ukraine, Costello was serving in the US military. "We were deployed in Japan, and we got the general message, 'We don't know what's going to happen with this, if it's going to be World War III.'"

Costello says that when he left the military last year, "I was very interested in pursuing something to support Ukraine in some capacity." He enrolled at Michigan Law, learned about Truth Hounds, and sought an internship. "They were very receptive to me. I am not a Ukrainian speaker—I'm trying to learn. But I've been very much welcomed and very happy to do whatever I can for the organization."

As a legal intern, Costello mostly assisted with legal analysis, writing memos to support the staff and doing independent research. "I've learned a lot about the process that goes along with investigations like this," Costello says.

"There's the legal side, but there's also the documentation side and the investigation side," he says. "To create a body of evidence, it's really everything working together. It's a lot of open-source intelligence analysis of social media, internet, and satellite imagery."



2L Stephen Costello, who spent his summer internship with Truth Hounds in Kyiv, in front of the Ukrainian Motherland Monument.

Costello toured towns on the outskirts of Kyiv that Russia tried to use to seize the city in 2022. "It's all still there—all of the destroyed infrastructure, the battle sites, the fences with bullet holes."

Living in Kyiv, Costello says he has seen that "the pace of attacks, unfortunately, is increasing. The war's really starting to escalate," he says. "That really drives home the purpose that you get from working for an organization like Truth Hounds."

A long-term, international law perspective

Soldatenko, who is in his second year of SJD studies, is from Ukraine. He has worked as an independent legal consultant with Truth Hounds and other NGOs and government entities in Ukraine. After he received Michigan Law's Virginia Gordan LLM Public Service Fellowship in 2025, he worked at the International Law Commission.

He got involved with Truth Hounds when he was pursuing his master's degree at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. One of his professors was Dmytro Koval, who is now the organization's co-executive director, and he brought Soldatenko into some Truth Hounds-related projects.

After that, Soldatenko consulted with the organization on a project basis. For one project, he developed a way to evaluate war crime judgments in domestic courts, assigning them a grade based on how they apply international law. This allowed him and Truth Hounds to compile a database that shows where weaknesses lie in war crime judgments, which war crimes are adjudicated the most, and which regions have handled the most cases at different points in time. The database helps Truth Hounds focus its work to train judges accordingly.

Soldatenko's SJD research focuses on the operation of international law over the long term. The war in Ukraine shows that in the short term, "there are serious flaws in international law and the UN system. My idea is that there might be more slow-moving processes and slow-moving dynamics through which international law affects states," he says.

He points out that, along with the impact on Ukraine, the war also creates long-term costs for Russia. "All Russian capacity to pursue its foreign policy goals is crippled," as the UN condemns Russia's aggression each year, he says.

"It's not just a war for the territory. It's a war of attrition. It's a war full of crimes, which affects not only Ukraine. And in the future, it will be remembered like that," Soldatenko says.

While some NGOs collect evidence of war crimes to file claims with the International Criminal Court, "the bar is very high, and usually those are not taken up by the International Criminal Court, which is already loaded with all different kinds of cases," Soldatenko says.

In contrast, the data Truth Hounds collects will be valuable in the long term, to help people understand this conflict in the future and remember in detail how Russia conducted it, he says. For example, the organization issued a report on Russia's forced recruitment of Bangladeshi men as mercenaries, which documents specific details of Russia's conduct in this war, he says.

"The notion of international accountability, I feel, is a muscle that the international system has to work and expand and develop," Harary says. "And I think it's important to keep doing that in a creative and persistent way."



Connections forged at Michigan Law

Harary, Costello, and Soldatenko say Michigan Law has helped prepare them for this work.

"I think Michigan Law has a very supportive international center and community," Harary says. "There was always an open door and a personalized attention to my interest—not just pointing me to a page, but actually people who would listen to me and think about ways that they could help me develop and find opportunities."

"I still remember Evan coming into the center's office as a 1L and asking how he could get to Eastern Europe for the summer," says Elizabeth Snook, international affairs program manager at the Center for International and Comparative Law. "It's incredibly rewarding to support a student's long-held interest and watch it develop into such meaningful work. Seeing our students and alumni forge their own paths—and then remain connected to Michigan Law in ways that create new opportunities for others—is one of the best parts of what we do."

Costello notes that Harary and Soldatenko helped connect him to Truth Hounds. "If you play law right, in my mind, you can really help a lot of people and make a global impact, especially with a degree from Michigan and the kind of experience that you get there," Costello says.

From being in Ukraine, Costello has learned that the US media's representations of the war often don't tell the whole story. "Whatever people think about this conflict and how it's going for the Ukrainian people and how their lives are affected by this, it's worse. It's really gruesome. It's a coordinated effort by a terrorist state to deprive a people of their territory, their culture, their language, and their freedom."



Evan Harary, '21, serves as legal counsel for Truth Hounds. "We're bringing to light difficult topics, on the initiative of victims, because there are things we investigate that our victims really want publicized," he says.

Beyond Truth Hounds' specific work, Costello says, "What Ukraine is doing is important on a number of levels, for the future of international peace and justice and the idea that a big, powerful country cannot just walk over a smaller one, destroy its culture, and seize it. To be in any way a part of that has been extremely rewarding."

Truth Hounds' team of documenters collects testimonies, physical evidence, and documentary evidence from various sites in Ukraine.





Hannon, '05, Begins Serving as Assistant Dean for Admissions

Margaret Hannon, '05, became the assistant dean for admissions at the Law School in August.

She joined the Michigan Law faculty in 2013; from 2019 until this summer, she was a clinical professor in the Legal Practice Program.

"I love teaching and wasn't looking to leave the faculty; in fact, there's really no job other than this that I would leave legal writing to do. And I wouldn't want to be an admissions dean anywhere else. I love this institution, and the idea of being able to be that person who makes a difference for so many students is truly a unique opportunity."

Hannon rose to the top of a highly competitive, nationwide search, said Neel Sukhatme, the David A. Breach Dean of Law and professor of law.

"Margaret has worked closely with students throughout their 1L experience, giving her a deep understanding of the transition into law school and the needs of prospective and incoming students," Sukhatme says. "She is also a proud Michigan Law alum with a deep commitment to this institution and to student success. I am confident that she brings the judgment, leadership, and enthusiasm that will serve our admissions team and the Law School well."

Hannon succeeded Sarah Zearfoss, '92, who has led the Law School's admissions efforts since 2001. In May, Zearfoss announced a phased retirement that will take full effect at the end of the 2026–2027 academic year.

A unique lens on the student experience

In her 13 years as a professor in Michigan Law's Legal Practice Program, Hannon worked extensively with scores of first-year students as well as with 2Ls and 3Ls who served as senior judges (course assistants) under her mentorship. She also taught an upper-level writing class.

She said this has given her an important perspective for her new role.

"Students arrive with excitement about the goals that brought them to law school, and that's what I really want them to hold onto during 1L year because that's what makes the difficult moments worth pushing through.

"Of course in any law school experience, there's going to be difficult moments. It's a really rigorous experience. Something that has been really important in my teaching is to help students remember why they came here and to help them see how their experience here will help them accomplish their goals."

Continuing a legacy

Hannon praised Zearfoss's leadership while acknowledging the challenge of following someone who has excelled in the role for nearly three decades.

"Sarah is a legend, and I feel incredibly lucky to be following her in this role and to have the opportunity to learn from her," Hannon says.

Zearfoss, who admitted Hannon as part of one of her earliest classes, says Hannon is a natural fit to be the new assistant dean. "She has a terrific sense of humor, an absolutely unbeatable work ethic, and the kind of energy that draws people to her. The fact that she knows our culture and our students from the points of view of both an alumna and a professor will be incredibly powerful when she is talking to prospective students."

Patrick Barry Named Inaugural Director of AI Initiatives



Professor Patrick Barry has stepped into a new role as director of artificial intelligence initiatives for Michigan Law. In this role, Barry is coordinating the Law School's expanding portfolio of AI-related initiatives, with a particular focus on skills training and student programming.

Barry—who created the online course AI for Lawyers and Other Advocates and is the author of the new book *AI Tips and Traps*—is teaching two Michigan Law classes in the fall semester: AI Sandbox and Editing, Advocacy, and AI.

His goal is to establish Michigan Law as a place known for producing graduates who are particularly well-suited for the emerging AI world: "I want people to know that if they hire a lawyer who went to Michigan, they will be getting someone who is really good at AI and really good at…being an imaginative, analytical, and empathetic human being."

SJD Candidate Erick Guapizaca Jiménez, LLM '23, Clerking at ICJ



Each year, 15 students from around the world are chosen for the Judicial Fellowship Programme at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague. This year, one of them is SJD student Erick Guapizaca Jiménez, LLM '23.

As the world's highest international court and the United Nations' main judicial body, the ICJ settles legal disputes between states and issues advisory opinions on legal questions referred to the court by United Nations organs and specialized agencies. Through the Judicial Fellowship Programme, Guapizaca is poised to help the ICJ address some of the most significant disputes in international law. He is serving in the chambers of the Hon. Yuji Iwasawa, president of the ICJ.

At the ICJ, Guapizaca hopes to learn "how the court preserves the rule of law in a period marked by polarization, recurring threats to peace, and increasing global conflict." His SJD research focuses on Indigenous rights, including "testing the conventional wisdom on what Indigenous rights really are, what their role is in different countries, and how they temper state power."

And this ties into the ICJ, he says, "because one of the main issues of international law as I see it is the implementation. It's how these broad rules that are mostly agreed on in New York, in Geneva, or in different forums can be later translated into domestic policies, into real commitments that can change people's lives."

Hannah Walser Joins Michigan Law Faculty



Hannah Walser came to legal academia from the world of literature, where published *Writing the Mind: Social Cognition in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction* (Stanford University Press, 2022). Following her PhD at Stanford, Walser participated in the interdisciplinary Harvard Society of Fellows program. "There were a couple legal academics there, and as we got to talking, I realized that a lot of the questions that I had been trying to think through as a matter of literary history and intellectual history in the 19th century were also being explored or more practically worked through in the context of law," she says.

After earning her JD and doing postdoctoral work as a Furman Fellow at New York University Law School, Walser joined the Michigan Law faculty this fall as an assistant professor.

People's mental states are one area of intellectual interest for Walser. "The law cares about mental states on a lot of different levels—for criminal culpability, for the meaning of a statute or a contract, for questions of consent," Walser says. "I realized that these legal fields were working through some really sophisticated understandings of the epistemic value of mental states."

As a professor, Walser's interests include constitutional law, particularly the First Amendment, and criminal law. "Thinking about how the law understands language is an obvious extension of the kind of work I've done on the English side in the past," she says. "I've written about statutory interpretation, and I'm also interested in how the law defines particular speech crimes. For instance, what is a threat? Then, criminal law is one of the substantive areas of law where mental states matter most. We use them to define degrees of culpability, which ultimately determines punishment and collateral consequences. That's a place where the stakes of getting it right are especially high."



Quinton Jones-Whitaker, center, with his student-attorneys, Riley Segal (left) and Maxime Legros (right).

Michigan Innocence Clinic Client Quinton Jones-Whitaker Exonerated

In 2014, when Quinton Jones-Whitaker was 20 years old, he was convicted of carjacking, armed robbery, and felony firearm possession and was sentenced to 12 1/2 to 22 years in prison. But he wasn't involved in the crime, and no physical evidence linked him to it.

The only evidence against him was a flawed witness identification. He had an alibi, but it wasn't presented properly in his case. In May, after serving his minimum sentence of 12 1/2 years, Jones-Whitaker was paroled. And on June 23, he was exonerated with the help of the Michigan Innocence Clinic.

Now 33 years old, Jones-Whitaker says, "Being exonerated changes my life by clearing my name and the mistakes they made. It allows me to actually start the life that they took from me when I was 20."

"Mr. Jones-Whitaker's innocence was so clear to us, and we're so happy that he's finally home," says 3L Maxime Legros. He and 3L Riley Segal were the two Michigan Innocence Clinic student-attorneys working on Jones-Whitaker's case during the 2025–2026 academic year.

"It was really special to see the efforts of so many student-attorneys and of Quinton, his family, and the clinic all culminate," Segal says. "This is what we're working toward. This is the goal of every single student-attorney in the clinic."

Criminal Appellate Practice Clinic Secures Reversal, New Trial

The Michigan Court of Appeals recently reversed the trial court's judgment in a felony murder case, agreeing with the defense on two issues that Criminal Appellate Practice (CAP) Clinic student-attorneys had briefed. Now the defendant will get a new trial.

Meg Beyer, '24, and Alexandra ("Al") Hargrave, '25, pinpointed these issues when they were a 3L and 2L, respectively, in the 2024 winter semester. As student-attorneys in the CAP Clinic, they functioned as members of a litigation team alongside Professor Michael Mittlestat.

Both Beyer and Hargrave are now public defenders—Beyer at the Hamilton County Public Defender in Ohio, and Hargrave at Legal Aid Society in Brooklyn, New York. Beyer returned to Michigan to argue the case.

Marquis Thomas was convicted of felony murder, for killing a friend during an alleged armed robbery. Thomas maintained that he shot and killed his friend by accident. The trial court improperly instructed the jury that accident is not a defense to felony murder, the Michigan Court of Appeals found.

The second issue the appeals court agreed with is one that Hargrave had briefed regarding Thomas's sentencing: The trial court had failed to score the sentencing guidelines properly for the weapon-possession crime Thomas admitted committing.

In their day-to-day work as public defenders, Beyer and Hargrave handle cases at the trial level, but their experience with Thomas's appeal informs their current work.

"For me now, as a line attorney, it's helpful to review the things that can go wrong at trial. Returning to the case was a good reminder of just how different a trial is in practice than when you are sitting in your office preparing for it," Beyer says.

Civil Rights Litigation Initiative Secures Settlement in Racial Intimidation Case

A Black mother and daughter, Je Donna and India Dinges, have settled their federal lawsuit against their former neighbor with help from the Law School's Civil Rights Litigation Initiative (CRLI).

In February 2021, the white neighbor hung a Ku Klux Klan flag in the window of his Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan, home. The flag directly faced the Dinges family's dining room, less than 10 feet away.

CRLI represented the family, after the case was referred by the Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit. In 2023, CRLI filed a lawsuit in the US District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan that alleged violations of a Reconstruction-era civil rights law designed to protect Black Americans from racially motivated threats from groups like the KKK. The lawsuit alleged the neighbor engaged in a pattern of racial intimidation both before and after he hung the flag in the window.

After years of litigation, the parties agreed to settle for an undisclosed amount. Fifteen Michigan Law student-attorneys worked on the case under the supervision of Professor Michael J. Steinberg, the director of CRLI.

Je Donna Dinges says her experience with the clinic had benefits beyond the settlement. "When something this traumatic happens to you, it shakes your confidence in the legal system, as well as in humanity. The members of the CRLI team not only restored our faith in our legal system, they restored our faith in humanity by making us feel seen, heard, and valued and by fighting for us."



The Civil Rights Litigation Initiative legal team is pictured with their clients in the US District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. Pictured left to right are Nate Sumimoto, '26; Avery Coombe, '26; Je Donna Dinges; rising 3L Edward Madrigal; India Dinges; CRLI director Michael J. Steinberg; and Alexandra Jackman, '26.



Clinic Adds New Focus on Estate Planning

The Low Income Taxpayer Clinic at Michigan Law this fall expanded its work to include an estate planning component.

The clinic was founded nearly 20 years ago to help low-income clients with tax issues. Now renamed the Tax and Estate Planning Clinic, the clinic is also helping its clients deal with issues like medical and financial powers of attorney, funeral planning, dependent care, and what will happen to the family home in the event of death.

The clinic has grown to 18 students in the fall semester—some of whom are returning, advanced students, and all of whom will gain experience in both income tax and estate planning law. The estate planning services were offered specifically to existing tax clients this fall, but the clinic plans to open up to new clients in future semesters.

"The clients are so surprised and happy about the new services," says clinic Director Nicole Appleberry, '94. "Some say, 'Why would I need this? I own nothing.' But you own your sovereignty over what you want to have happen to your body when you become incapacitated or die, or who's going to pay your rent if you can't.

"For that type of thing, our work can help avoid a crisis. We can get those documents together so that if something does happen, their wishes can be known and effectuated."

Litman, '10, Wins ACS Cudahy Writing Competition



The American Constitution Society (ACS) has named Professor Leah Litman, '10, as the winner of its 2026 Richard D. Cudahy Writing Competition on Regulatory and Administrative Law.

Litman, who is also associate dean for faculty and research, and her co-authors were honored for their paper "Unsettling the Presidency," which explores the president and the administration's actions that leverage or appropriate the powers of the US court system. In particular, they argue that the administration has gone beyond simple attacks on the courts and is attempting to usurp their authority—in "an all-out assault on the separation of powers."

This is Litman's second time being honored in the Cudahy competition. She also won in 2023 for a paper co-authored with Professor Daniel Deacon. Nicholas Bagley, the Thomas G. Long Professor of Law, won the competition in 2015.

"Michigan Law is really becoming a powerhouse in administrative law," Litman says. "We have faculty who approach administrative law issues from many different angles—some from a more historical lens, some from more doctrinal, some from more descriptive."

Thompson, '99, Earns Legal Innovation Award



Michigan Lawyers Weekly has chosen Professor Dana A. Thompson, '99, as a 2026 Legal Innovation Award honoree for innovation in legal education, specifically citing her work as the founding director of the Law School's Zell Entrepreneurship Clinic.

Honorees were chosen "for exemplifying how the legal profession is evolving to better serve clients, improve access to justice, and modernize how legal services are delivered."

The first of its kind in the United States, the Zell Entrepreneurship Clinic provides no-cost legal services to a significant number of University of Michigan student-led and other startups. It offers an array of services and resources, including direct legal representation, office hours, workshops, and blog posts with current information about entrepreneurial legal issues.

Thompson, a clinical professor of law, directs Michigan Law's Transactional Law Clinics Program and currently serves as director of the Community Enterprise Clinic.

"I am honored to receive this recognition from *Michigan Lawyers Weekly*," Thompson says. "To me, it reflects the impact that the Zell Entrepreneurship Clinic has had in helping strengthen the University of Michigan's entrepreneurial ecosystem while providing law students with meaningful experiential learning opportunities."

Niehoff, '84, Receives Educator Award from State Bar



Professor Len Niehoff, '84, received the John W. Reed Michigan Lawyer Legacy Award from the State Bar of Michigan in September. He is the fifth Michigan Law professor to receive the award, which is named for a longtime member of the faculty.

The honor "is awarded periodically to a Michigan law school educator whose influence on lawyers has elevated the quality of legal practice in our state," according to the state bar announcement.

"I am deeply honored to receive this award from the State Bar of Michigan," says Niehoff, a professor from practice. "It's particularly meaningful for me because it is named for John Reed, who was a beloved friend, a revered colleague at Michigan Law, the dean who hired me to teach Evidence at Wayne State, and my own Evidence professor at Michigan."

Niehoff teaches courses in Civil Procedure, Ethics, Evidence, First Amendment, and Media Law, and seminars in Law and Theology and Shakespeare and the Law. He has taught short seminars on a wide variety of subjects, including the history of banned books and the Salem Witch Trials.

His latest book is *Meeting Shakespeare at the Bar: Reading the Bard Through the Lens of the Law* (American Bar Association, 2026).

Michigan Law Projects Earn Grants from University's Strategic Initiative Fund

A newly announced grant from the University of Michigan will enable the Law School's MDefenders program to create a new center for training and inspiring public defenders and for strengthening US indigent defense systems.

An additional grant will provide support to a program in which the Law School partners with Legal Services of South Central Michigan and Michigan Medicine to integrate legal professionals into health care settings.

The grants come from the University's Strategic Initiative Fund, which accelerates ideas with the potential to create lasting, transformational change across the campus community and society. The Law School programs are among 37 proposals selected for funding this year through a rigorous, multistage review process.

"Interdisciplinary partnerships like this are critical to addressing society's challenges," says Neel U. Sukhatme, the David A. Breach Dean of Law and professor of law. "I'm thankful for the University's support, and I'm proud of our faculty's involvement in such innovative, forward-thinking efforts."

The MDefenders Center for Public Defense will be a national hub at Michigan Law dedicated to training the next generation of public defenders, strengthening public defense systems nationwide, and expanding equitable access to justice. The new center will integrate simulation-based training, trauma-informed advocacy education, alumni mentorship, data-driven litigation resources, and national policy engagement. "[Through this grant,] Michigan Law has a unique opportunity to build on its tradition of preparing exceptional, client-centered public defenders and become a national leader in strengthening public defense," says Eve Primus, '01, MDefenders director and the Yale Kamisar Collegiate Professor of Law. (Read more about MDefenders on page 20.)

The Ypsilanti Health Center-Legal Services of South Central Michigan Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP) will expand an existing partnership that integrates legal professionals into health care settings to address social and legal issues that negatively impact patient health. The new grant will expand the MLP into new areas and incorporate a research component. Debra Chopp, associate dean for experiential education and director of the Law School's Pediatric Advocacy Clinic, leads the school's partnership with Michigan Medicine on this project.



Case Thomason, '26, Wins Prize for Paper Exploring Social Media Regulation

Case Thomason, '26, received the Law School's 2026 Paul R. Dimond Prize for his scholarly writing on how design-based bans, rather than content-based bans, are the future of social media regulation.

His paper, "Scalpels, Not Hatchets: Beyond Access Bans and Toward a Design-Based Framework for Social Media Regulation," examines repeated attempts by states to regulate social media for minors, and how nearly every proposed piece of legislation has been struck down in federal court before taking effect.

"The problem is structural, in that lawmakers have been using hatchets rather than scalpels to address this issue," Thomason wrote.

Hatchets, as he stated in his paper, are sweeping, access-based restrictions that condition minors' access to platforms on age verification or parental consent. Scalpels, he contrasted, are precise, design-based regulations that target specific platform features, such as push notifications, autoplay, infinite scroll, and engagement-optimizing algorithms.

The Dimond Prize, made available through the generosity of Paul R. Dimond, '69, is awarded each year for the best scholarly work by Michigan Law students or junior faculty in civil rights, constitutional law, or judicial review.



For Climate Week, a Walk through Climate Law

A series of exhibits around the Law Quad this fall delved into how the law affects the environment and the climate. The exhibits, which were part of U-M's Climate Week 2026, covered topics from coral reef bleaching to electric vehicles, prompted by what 3L Benjamin Korn learned in his Environmental and Energy Law Program (EELP) courses.

"I thought Climate Week was a great opportunity to bring some of that material out of the Law School classrooms and into a more public-facing environment," Korn says. "The law impacts everyone, and our ability to communicate it to the public is so important."

Korn brought the idea to life with the EELP faculty's support. Before coming to Michigan Law, he worked in public relations in New York City and helped plan events for Climate Week NYC, including creating interactive exhibits. He also served as a naturalist in Aspen, Colorado, leading public tours for an environmental nonprofit. He drew on both of these experiences to create the exhibits.

"I like the idea of using the common space of the Law Quad that people walk through every day. Along with the elm trees [that died from Dutch elm disease], another exhibit discusses the Law Quad's hydrangeas," Korn says. "With the substance of the exhibits, I tried to use the setting as an accessible 'in' to what is often a highbrow, disconnected experience with the law."

AALS Honors Waggoner, '63, and Avi-Yonah





The trusts and estates section of the American Association of Law Schools (AALS) has chosen Lawrence Waggoner, '63, the Lewis M. Simes Professor Emeritus of Law, to receive the Browne C. Lewis Award for lifetime achievement. Waggoner retired in 2012 after 44 years of teaching, 38 of which were at Michigan.

Waggoner is a leading figure in law reform with both the Uniform Law Commission (ULC) and the American Law Institute (ALI) in the fields of wills, trusts, and estates. Courts and legislatures in many US states—including Michigan—have adopted Waggoner's ULC and ALI law-reform proposals. Law school courses and casebooks nationwide are organized around his law-reform work. He served as the principal architect and drafter of the Uniform Probate Code revisions completed in the 1990s. He also was the reporter for the Uniform Statutory Rule Against Perpetuities, the Uniform Simultaneous Death Act, and the Uniform Testamentary Additions to Trusts Act.

The AALS taxation section has chosen Reuven Avi-Yonah, the Irwin I. Cohn Professor of Law, to receive its Lifetime Achievement Award.

Avi-Yonah specializes in corporate and international taxation. He has served as a consultant to the US Department of the Treasury and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. He has published more than 250 books and articles, including *The International Tax Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 2025), *Advanced Introduction to International Tax Law* (Elgar, 2019), *Global Perspectives on Income Taxation Law* (Oxford University Press, 2011), and *International Tax as International Law* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Avi-Yonah was recognized for "not only the depth and reach of [his] scholarship and its influence on tax policy well beyond the academy, but also [his] extraordinary generosity as a mentor, particularly to the many international LLM and SJD students whose careers [he has] helped launch."



Students Travel to Tanzania for Academic Program on African Law

Over the summer, two recent Michigan Law graduates and one third-year law student participated in a two-week academic program in Arusha, Tanzania, on African law and African Union law. They were the only American students invited to participate.

Through the Law School's Center for International and Comparative Law (CICL) and the Clara Belfield and Henry Bates Overseas Fellowship, Lindsey Bressler, '26; Moamen Keshlaf, '26; and Awo Onwudiwe, a 3L, traveled across the globe in early August for the 2026 Kilimanjaro Academy on African Union Law and the Public Law of Africa.

Facilitated by the African Institute of International Law (AIIL), the Kilimanjaro Academy is designed to give participants a deeper understanding of Africa's legal frameworks. The program, which is by invitation only, is open to students, professionals, government officials, and policymakers interested in African legal systems. The Hon. Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf, a former president of the International Court of Justice, founded AIIL in 2012 and serves as its president. The Law School's invitation to participate in the academy came from the school's ongoing connection with Judge Yusuf, particularly after he visited campus to give the 2025 Bishop Lecture.

"The overwhelmingly positive response to this year's program really shows why we value our new partnership with AIIL, but it also reflects so well on these three remarkable students," says Eric Christiansen, assistant dean of international affairs.

"It's been exciting to hear their expansive, even adventurous, attitude toward this intensive learning experience. It's a global perspective that Michigan Law has always valued—and it will serve them well in their professional lives."

Pang Earns Honor from Bankruptcy Journal



Belisa Pang, an assistant professor of law, received the Editor's Prize this fall from the *American Bankruptcy Law Journal*. The award is presented annually by the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges to an author or authors who demonstrated special excellence in an article published in the journal.

Pang was honored for the article "Parental Obligations in Bankruptcy," which was published in 2025. Pang and her co-author, Katherine Fang, conducted a study that found that debtors with dependents are more likely to choose chapter 13 bankruptcy over the "quicker and simpler" chapter 7 bankruptcy. Those same debtors are also more likely to have a bankruptcy court dismiss their cases without discharging their debt within three years, the study found. The article suggests changes that could alleviate the disparities.

"I'm honored and grateful for the interest in my work," Pang says. "I hope to continue producing scholarship that is useful not only to academics but also to practitioners and others working in the bankruptcy field."

Guy-Uriel Charles, '97, Returns for Constitution Day Lecture

During the commemoration of Constitution Day in September, Harvard Law School Professor Guy-Uriel Charles, '97, returned to the Law Quad to discuss the impact of the Supreme Court's 6-3 decision in *Louisiana v. Callais* earlier this year.



Callais marks the end of the Voting Rights Act (VRA), Charles says. "In my view, *Callais* is the most significant voting rights decision of our time…. It eliminated the act's last meaningful mechanism for protecting voters of color, and it ensured that henceforth, the VRA will no longer function as an anti-discriminatory device and as an anti-majoritarian safeguard for democracy."

Charles is the Charles J. Ogletree Jr. Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, as well as deputy dean. He also is faculty director of the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice.

A Launchpad for Budding Lawyers

By Annie Hagstrom

At 14, Bruce Byrd, '93, decided on his future: He would become a lawyer. He was so determined to attend law school that he structured his undergraduate degree around it, citing studies showing that economics majors scored well on the LSAT.

Bruce followed his childhood plans and earned his undergraduate degree in economics at the University of Michigan's College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LSA) and became a double Wolverine by matriculating at the Law School.

"I entered Michigan Law as a summer starter in June of 1990," he recalls. "There were maybe two or three weeks between graduating from college and going to law school. That summer was marvelous; it was quiet on campus, the weather was spectacular, and it felt like we had the Law Quad to ourselves."

One of the most memorable parts of Bruce's first semester as a law student was Professor J.J. White's contracts class. "He was the definition of fair but also rigorous and exacting," says Bruce. "His teaching made me excited about the life choice I had made."

"We want to make it easier for somebody to go to a place like Michigan Law. It's not more complicated than that."

Stretching his skills

Bruce joined Dickinson Wright PLLC out of law school and became a partner after six years. In 2000, he joined AT&T, where he spent the next 20 years serving in multiple roles.

"I am as proud of [my work at AT&T] as anything I've done as a lawyer," he says. "I held varied roles in five different cities and learned I don't have to be just one kind of lawyer."

He then became the executive vice president and general counsel at Palo Alto Networks in 2021, saying that he made the switch because he had "one more rung of capability" in him. He adds, "It's the best and hardest job I've ever had."

Outside of his career, Bruce also recently joined Michigan Law's new Artificial Intelligence (AI) Advisory Council.



Bruce Byrd, '93, and Jennifer Byrd are longtime, loyal donors to the Law School.

"I jumped at the chance to join," he says. "Because of AI, I think the way law schools prepare students for their careers is going to change, perhaps radically. I also think it's critically important that Michigan Law be at the absolute forefront of the change. I want to learn from being part of this council and do my part to help the school navigate these new technological paths."

There's no place like U-M

Bruce and his wife, Jennifer, have been longtime, loyal donors to the Law School. Their latest gift benefits the Law School, LSA, and the University of Michigan Museum of Art (UMMA).

A portion of the gift will be added to the Bruce and Jennifer Byrd Scholarship Fund, and the remainder of their $475,000 gift to the Law School will establish the Byrd Family Loan Repayment Assistance Fund.

"My parents paid for my education, and my wife and I are going to be able to pay for our kids' education—that's just not the case for a lot of people," says Bruce. "We want to make it easier for somebody to go to a place like Michigan Law. It's not more complicated than that."

Their decision to also contribute to LSA and UMMA stems from personal connections. Their daughter, Cali, is currently attending LSA, and Jennifer recently joined UMMA's Director Acquisition Committee.

"As someone who is not a University of Michigan alum, I have been embraced by the Michigan community," says Jennifer. "They do a great job of bringing people in, which says something about the spirit of Michigan itself. For us, we want to support the welcoming community ethos that is a defining characteristic of the institution."

Bruce adds, "Beyond the standard philanthropic motivations behind any gift, it's about deepening our connection to Ann Arbor and the University, which we consider one of our happy places."

Advancing Legal Culture through Experiential Learning

By Annie Hagstrom



Justice Bobbe J. Bridge has rarely slowed down. From being the first woman law clerk, associate, and partner at Garvey Schubert Barer (now Foster Garvey PC), to serving on both the King County Superior Court and the Washington State Supreme Court, to founding and leading a juvenile justice organization, her career has been defined by a commitment to justice, particularly for children and families.

After retiring from the bench in 2007, Bridge assumed the role of founding president and CEO of the Seattle-based Center for Children & Youth Justice, a private not-for-profit agency advocating for juvenile justice, child welfare, and related systems reform. She led the organization until 2019 and, in retirement, has stayed involved with institutions she believes in.

Although she did not attend Michigan Law, Bridge has long admired its commitment to experiential learning. "The Law School has that in spades," she says. "For a major law school in the United States, it adopted the idea of clinical programs early on and with vigor. Today, there are ever more opportunities for students to gain clinical experience, which is how it should be."

She and her husband, Jon, recently gave $1,000,000 to Michigan Law. The Bobbe and Jon Bridge Endowed Fund for Child Advocacy will receive $850,000, and the remaining $150,000 will establish the Bobbe and Jon Bridge Fund for Supplemental Clinic Services.

Bridge believes that interdisciplinary collaboration is essential to effective child advocacy.

"My lifelong work as a judge and advocate has taught me that when systems fail children, the consequences echo across generations. These gifts reflect my conviction that we must listen to young people, confront inequity head-on, and redesign systems around their needs and strengths."

She continues, "I wish to empower Michigan Law students and faculty to challenge injustice and elevate the voices of youth and families. I hope that this support will advance a legal culture where every decision affecting a child is guided by dignity, compassion, and the unwavering pursuit of justice."

A Commitment to Accessibility

By Annie Hagstrom

"It's important to me that I invest as much as I can to ameliorate the governmental cutbacks on universities and other organizations, especially those that promote the rule of law and the rights of individuals. I particularly hope this scholarship will help talented, self-motivated people with disabilities pursue their legal education and achieve all they hope for in their careers."

—BRIAN FRUMKIN, '80



Brian Frumkin, '80, recently gave $200,000 to the Law School to establish the Brian Frumkin Scholarship Fund, which recognizes and celebrates students with disabilities who may rely on assistance and accommodations provided by the government, the private sector, and their families. Frumkin spent more than 35 years working as in-house counsel at Bank of America in California and North Carolina, specializing in consumer financial services and digital payment solutions and overseeing compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. He currently serves on the board of directors of Disability Rights Advocates, a national organization of lawyers who pursue high-impact litigation on behalf of people with disabilities.

A Love for Learning and the Underground Library

By Annie Hagstrom

Over the span of four years, Thomas E. "Tom" Kauper, '60, watched the construction of Michigan Law's underground library from his office window in Hutchins Hall.

A prominent practitioner and scholar of domestic and international antitrust law, Tom served as the Henry M. Butzel Professor Emeritus of Law at the Law School and chaired the planning committee during the underground library's subterranean expansion. He developed a close working relationship with the principal architect who oversaw its construction between 1978 and 1981.

"He was so passionate about the underground library being a place for both students and researchers to use," says Shirley Kauper, BS '58. (Tom and Shirley met in high school, married in 1958, and remained devoted to one another for 66 years.) "The students were vitally important to him, and he wished to impart a love for learning to them."

Tom died on February 9, 2025, at the age of 89. Shirley and their two daughters, Karen Kauper Legault, '86, and Krista Kauper, '88, honored him with a generous gift to the Law School that will be directed toward ongoing maintenance and improvements to the Law Library.

Three generations at the Law School

Tom practically grew up in the halls of Michigan Law—his father, Paul Kauper, '32, served on the faculty for 38 years.

"Paul was so statuesque, always kind and thoughtful, and anything he said was worth listening to," remembers Shirley.

After graduating from the Law School, Tom clerked for US Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart for two years. He then spent two years in private practice in Chicago before joining his father as a member of the Michigan Law faculty in 1964. Tom took a leave of absence from the faculty between 1969 and 1971 to serve as the first deputy assistant attorney general in the US Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office of Legal Counsel. From 1972 to 1976, Tom served as the assistant attorney general in charge of the DOJ's Antitrust Division, where he was an enthusiastic mentor to the young lawyers in the division. Tom resumed teaching at Michigan Law in 1976 and remained on the faculty until his retirement in 2008.

Karen and Krista mark the third generation of Kaupers to graduate from Michigan Law.



In honor of Professor Emeritus Tom Kauper, '60, Shirley Kauper, BS '58, and their daughters established a fund to support a place he loved: the underground library.

"Our dad was close to so many previous faculty members because of his father, and it was the same for us," says Krista. "We knew Jerry Israel, Doug Kahn, Yale Kamisar, and J.J. White while growing up. When we got to the Law School, suddenly these people we have always known are the experts we're learning from."

Karen adds, "Very few people run into their father in the halls when they're coming out of class. Plus, our grandfather's portrait was hanging in the building. It made for a unique, shared experience."

The capital campaign and long-lasting connections

Today, Shirley maintains connections with many of Tom's colleagues, who are lifelong friends. "Jerry Israel, Tom, and I would get together every Monday night for dinner. I'm continuing that with Jerry and Larry Waggoner, and I play golf with J.J. White. The relationships have remained strong."

Karen's children, now young adults, share a love for their family's connection to the Law School, and Krista has remained closely connected with a large number of classmates, including a dynamic group of women from her class.

To honor Tom and his dedication to the Law School and its students, Shirley, Karen, and Krista felt called to contribute. When the University's Look to Michigan campaign was announced, they recognized the opportunity to pay tribute to Tom. Their gift established the Thomas E. Kauper Law Library Fund, which will support the maintenance of the underground library by contributing to renovations and the acquisition of books, equipment, furniture, and other operational needs.

"When we learned that restoration of the underground library was a campaign priority for the Law School, we felt even more strongly about making a gift, especially to honor our dad's passion for that space," says Krista.

Angel L. Reyes III, '91: Taking a Leap and Paying Homage

By Annie Hagstrom

In the two years after Angel L. Reyes III, '91, graduated from Michigan Law, one interaction rooted in a shared native language altered the course of his career. Fast-forward more than 30 years, and he has helped countless clients pursue justice as a personal injury lawyer.

Angel Reyes & Associates PC is a Dallas-based firm that Reyes founded in 1993. He went from working in the litigation section of a large law firm to running his own firm, and he hasn't looked back.

A chance encounter

Reyes didn't grow up around lawyers. In fact, it wasn't until a few months into his first year of law school that he realized just how many practice areas of the law there are.

While he was working in litigation at a Texas law firm early in his career, a custodial staff member noticed his last name on the plaque outside his office door. She was looking for legal help but could speak only Spanish.

"She asked if I spoke Spanish, and when I said 'Yes,' she told me about her son," says Reyes. "He had been in a bad car accident, and the family needed legal help."

"I am so grateful for all of the doors that being a graduate of Michigan Law opened for me—they're countless."

After visiting her son in the ICU, Reyes brought the case to some of the partners at the firm, but they suggested he let it go because he was still new in his legal career. So Reyes quit, but he wasn't alone. James Carlson, '91, his friend and former roommate at Michigan Law, happened to be working at the same firm, and he wanted to help.

"We decided to quit the firm together and pursue this case on our own," says Reyes. "Months later, we settled the case. Thinking there were likely more Spanish-speaking people who needed legal help, I took my earnings and created my own personal injury law firm."

Advertisements for Angel Reyes & Associates aired on the Spanish-language channel Univision. At the time, the channel reached 12 local markets in Texas. A large number of Spanish-speaking immigrants came to Texas in the 1990s, and many were taking service and construction jobs, which can lead to injury. Today, his firm employs more than 700 legal professionals.



Angel L. Reyes III, '91, celebrated his 35th Law School Reunion with a $100,000 gift to his alma mater, which establishes the Law Class of 1991 Scholarship Fund.

Looking—and giving—back

This year marks Reyes's 35th Law School Reunion. To celebrate, he gave $100,000 to establish the Law Class of 1991 Scholarship Fund.

"For the past 20 years, my wife and I put a lot of focus into our daughter, and for the past 30, I've worked to grow my firm," says Reyes. "With my Reunion coming up, I knew it was time to give back. It won't be my last gift, but it's the first in a while and the most meaningful so far. I hope my classmates consider contributing, too."

Reyes says he's looking forward to being back in the Law Quad, walking through the streets of Ann Arbor, and trekking to the football stadium.

"I am so grateful for all of the doors that being a graduate of Michigan Law opened for me—they're countless," he says.

Recent Gifts

LEONARD J. BAXT, '72, documented a planned gift of $250,000 to establish the Baxt Family Scholarship Fund. Before retirement, Leonard was a mergers and acquisitions lawyer at Dow Lohnes for more than 40 years and served as chairman from 1998 to 2012.

L. ANDREW GIFFORD, '71, through his affiliation as a board member of the Corwin D. Denney Foundation, made a gift of $300,000 to establish the Corwin D. Denney Foundation Scholarship Fund. Andrew spent the majority of his career specializing in estates and trusts and continues to consult or a small number of clients. Andrew and his wife, Mary Jo, live in Santa Barbara, California.

TODD R. GREGORIAN, '04, made a gift to establish the Daniel A. Loeffler Memorial Scholarship Fund in honor of **DANIEL A. LOEFFLER, '03**. Todd is an intellectual property and commercial litigator at Fenwick & West LLP. Classmates and others who knew Dan may reach out to Todd or contact Lindsey Adkins at lbadkins@umich.edu if they would like to contribute.

ANDREW M. KATZENSTEIN, '82, made a gift of $100,000 to establish the Andrew M. Katzenstein Estate Planning Award. The fund will support an annual award to a student or students who demonstrate exceptional achievement in courses related to estate planning, with the goal of encouraging more Michigan Law graduates to work in the estate planning area upon graduation. Andrew practiced law for 43 years in Los Angeles; now in retirement, he is a partner at HCVT accounting and provides consulting services.

PAULA A. MABREY made a gift of $500,000 to the Jon C. Cederberg Memorial Scholarship Fund in honor of her late husband, **JON C. CEDERBERG, '77**, a renowned trial attorney in Los Angeles. After meeting at the University of Michigan, Jon and Paula were married and lived in Los Angeles for 45 years. The fund will now be named the Jon C. Cederberg and Paula Mabrey Scholarship Fund. Paula is a retired Los Angeles Superior Court Judge.

CARLA S. NEWELL, '85, made a gift of $125,000 to establish the Law and Technology Fund at Michigan Law. Contributions will be used to support initiatives related to law and technology, including programming, research, curricular development, lectureships, fellowships, courses, workshops, speaker series, and experiential education opportunities. Carla is the managing director and chief operating officer at GSR Ventures.

MAREN NORTON, '04, made a gift of $50,000 to the Victors for Michigan Law School Scholarship Fund. She is the managing partner at the Seattle office of Stoel Rives LLP and the immediate past chair of the firm's litigation group.

PAULA (HOUSER) POWERS, '75, and her husband, Brian, made a gift of $500,000 to establish the Paula and Brian Powers Family Law Scholarship Fund for first-generation law students. Paula and Brian also recently established a similar scholarship at U-M's College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. Paula served on the board of directors for the Rancho Santa Fe Foundation and is currently serving on the board of the Old Globe Theater. She previously practiced law with Debevoise and Plimpton LLP in New York, where she specialized in trusts and estates.

DEHAI TAO, LLM '88, made a gift of $2,500,000 to establish the Dehai Tao Professorship Fund. For more than 30 years, he has been the owner and founding attorney of Dehai Tao Immigration PLLC, an Ann Arbor-based law firm specializing in US immigration law.



For National Leadership in Training Exceptional Lawyers

Look to Michigan



The Look to Michigan campaign is a comprehensive effort to raise $225 million to support five areas that are critical to Michigan Law's success—

- Scholarships, fellowships, and debt management
- Innovation and research, including the new MDefenders Center for Public Defense
- Our campus, with significant investment in the Underground Library
- Engagement and partnerships to prepare the next generation of leaders
- The Law School Fund, which holistically supports the Law School's mission

GIVE NOW

michigan.law.umich.edu/LTM

At Michigan Law, we don't just teach the law—we shape it. And in a world of constant change, Michigan Law will continue to lead. But we cannot do it alone. We need partners who share our vision of going beyond the expected to solve urgent challenges and inspire brighter futures.

As the world looks to Michigan Law to lead, we look to you.

M LAW

for what's next ▸

Look to Michigan

CLASS NOTES

1967

ROBERT L. BERCHEM, LLM, received the 2026 Walter Camp Champion of Community Award, which recognizes individuals who have achieved distinction in business, public service, or private life while making meaningful contributions to their communities and charitable causes. Berchem is a founder of one of Connecticut's largest law firms, Milford-based Berchem Moses PC.

1968

DAVID CALLIES was honored with an honorary Festschrift edition of *The Urban Lawyer*, the quarterly law review of the American Bar Association Section of State and Local Government Law, for his scholarship, teaching, and mentorship in property and local government law. Callies is a professor of law emeritus at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

1970

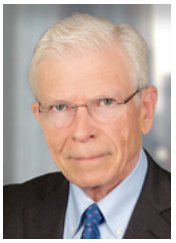


JAMES N. BARNES co-authored a chapter in *Antarctica as Model for Global Peace: A Compelling Contemporary Example of How Nations Can Thrive through Collaboration* (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and Fundación Agenda Antártica, 2025). Additionally, his book *Cherokee History and the Spirit Family* (University of North Georgia, 2024) won second-place in nonfiction at the 2025 Next Generation Indie Book Awards. Barnes has spent nearly 50 years helping to protect the Antarctic and founded the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition in 1978, which received the Gulbenkian Humanity Prize in 2025.

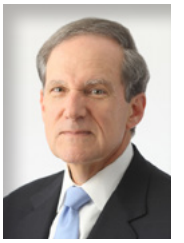
1971

R. JOSEPH KIMBLE received a Burton Award for Book of the Year in Legal Writing for *Essentials for Drafting Clear Legal Rules*, which he co-authored. He also worked as an editor for the anthology *Gems from the Scribes Journal of Legal Writing: Volumes 1–20*. Additionally, Kimble has written two children's books and served as the editor of the "Plain Language" column in the *Michigan Bar Journal* for 38 years.

1972

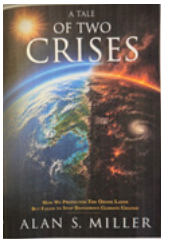


MARK A. CLODFELTER joined Arnall Golden Gregory LLP as senior counsel in the firm's international dispute resolution practice in Washington, DC. He has more than 40 years of experience in international commercial disputes, including representing sovereign states as well as individual and corporate investors, and in investor-state, state-to-state, and commercial disputes.



JEFFREY J. GREENBAUM received the Daniel J. O'Hern Award from the New Jersey Commission on Professionalism in the Law, which is a cooperative effort of the New Jersey State Bar Association, the New Jersey judiciary, and New Jersey's law schools. The award honors an attorney who exhibits integrity, competence, high ethical standards, career achievement, and service to the bar and/or community. Greenbaum is the chair of the class action practice group at Sills Cummis & Gross PC, with a specialty in complex business litigation and in defending class action litigation.

1974

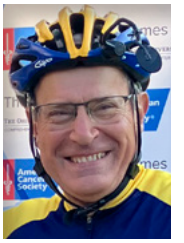


ALAN S. MILLER recently published a memoir, *A Tale of Two Crises: How We Protected the Ozone Layer But Failed to Stop Dangerous Climate Change* (Gatekeeper Press, 2026). Since retiring from the International Finance Corporation in 2013, Miller has focused on work related to climate finance and policy. He currently serves as a senior managing director at CoolPact Capital and as a member of Resilient Earth Capital.

1978

ROBERT STEERE was appointed as a member of the Illinois Finance Authority by Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker. He most recently served as general counsel with the Governor's Office of Management and Budget, retiring from the role in 2021. During his career, Steere advised on legal matters, including governance, bond financing, taxation, budgeting, legislation, regulatory compliance, and ethics.

1979



MARK A. FILIPPELL completed the Pan Ohio Hope Ride, a 348-mile, four-day bike ride from Cleveland to Cincinnati that raises money for the American Cancer Society Hope Lodge Program (he is pictured during a day-three water stop on the campus of the Ohio State University). Filippell retired in 2025 from his role as a managing director at Citizens M&A Advisory, a unit of Citizens Bank, and currently serves on the boards of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Bike Cleveland, and Cleveland's University Circle Inc., a nonprofit community organization.

1981

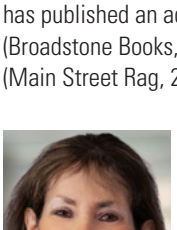
DAVID M. HONIGMAN was honored by the State Bar of Michigan with the 2026 Champion of Justice Award. The award is given to practicing lawyers and judges for their professional accomplishments that benefit the nation, state, or local community. Honigman, a former state senator, is a partner at Mantese Honigman PC in Troy, Michigan.

KENT D. SYVERUD, the 12th chancellor and president of Syracuse University, received honorary degrees from Syracuse and from the University of Michigan during their respective commencement ceremonies in May.

1982



JOHN GLOWNEY published *A Fish Child's Songbook* (Jacar Press, 2026), which received Jacar Press's 2025 Full-Length Book Award in the poetry category. One of Glowney's poems, "Sea to Shining Sea," won the Able Muse Press Write Prize in 2024. His poetry has appeared in *Narrative, The Iowa Review, Shenandoah, Catamaran, The Baltimore Review, The Shore, 32 Poems, The Bitter Oleander*, and many other journals. Glowney has published an additional full-length collection, *Visitation* (Broadstone Books, 2022), and a chapbook, *Cold-Hearted Boys* (Main Street Rag, 2024).



CAROLYN ROSENBERG received a Lifetime Achievement award at the 2026 Law.com Women, Influence & Power in Law Awards. Rosenberg is a partner in the Chicago office of Reed Smith LLP, where she advises policyholders on insurance coverage, corporate indemnification, enterprise risk management, and litigation matters.

1983

MICHAEL E. "MIKE" DUGGAN joined Honigman LLP as a partner in the firm's government relations and public policy practice group. Duggan previously served three terms as mayor of Detroit. Prior to his time in office, he was the CEO of Detroit Medical Center for eight years.

MARK FERGUSON was recognized in Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications' Hall of Achievement, which is the highest honor bestowed by the institution. He is a founding partner of Bartlit Beck LLP and fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers. Ferguson has spent 40 years as a nationally recognized trial lawyer in business, financial, and technical litigation.



W. GREGORY VOSS co-edited *The Oxford Handbook of Law and Management* (Oxford University Press, 2026). Additionally, an article he co-authored in 2016, "Proposal for an International Taxonomy on the Various Forms of the 'Right to Be Forgotten': A Study on the Convergence of Norms," was recently cited by the Delhi High Court at New Delhi, India, in the case of W.P.(C) 1021/2016 & Connected Matters. Voss is an associate member of a research institute for European, international, and comparative law at Université Toulouse Capitole in France.

1984

MICHAEL J. HERNANDEZ was named secretary of the fellows on the American Bar Foundation (ABF) board of directors for the 2025–26 fiscal year. He is a life fellow of the ABF and previously served as Illinois state chair of the fellows of the ABF from 2021 to 2024. Hernandez is a partner at Franczek PC, where he practices labor and employment law and advises employers on collective bargaining, workplace equity, and compliance issues.

ERNEST J. NEWBORN II was named a trustee of Drake University. He retired as senior vice president and general counsel at USI Insurance Services in 2025 after 28 years of service. Newborn also serves as the chairman of the board of trustees for the Strada Education Foundation, a nonprofit organization focused on strengthening connections between education and opportunity in the United States.

DID YOU GET A NEW JOB OR A PROMOTION? WERE YOU RECOGNIZED WITH AN AWARD?
Share your news with classmates in an upcoming issue of the *Law Quadrangle*. Email LQNClassNotes@umich.edu or visit law.umich.edu/classnotes to submit a class note online.

LEONARD "LEN" NIEHOFF JR. was honored by the State Bar of Michigan with the 2026 John W. Reed Michigan Lawyer Legacy Award for his influence in elevating the quality of legal practice in the state. Niehoff is a professor from practice at Michigan Law and is a nationally recognized practitioner in the fields of media law, higher education law, and trial and appellate litigation. Read more on page 36.

WALTER E. "WALT" SPIEGEL was elected chair of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA). He previously served as JCPA's vice chair and governance chair. Spiegel is the vice president, general counsel, and chief compliance officer at Standard Textile Co. Inc. in Cincinnati.

CLASS NOTES

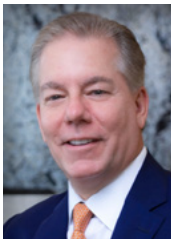
1985



JULIE A. GREENBERG joined Reising Ethington PC as a shareholder. She has more than 30 years of experience in intellectual property protection, with a focus on worldwide trademark prosecution and protection.

1986

LORI McALLISTER was elected chair of the board of directors of the Attorneys' Liability Assurance Society (ALAS). She has served on the ALAS board of directors for more than a decade and previously chaired its audit committee. McAllister is an attorney, member, and general counsel at Dykema Gossett PLLC, where she has served for 40 years.



JOHN B. THOMAS, a co-founder of the Houston-based boutique law firm Hicks Thomas LLP, was named one of *Lawdragon*'s 100 Managing Partners You Need to Know for 2026. His practice focuses on complex commercial litigation related to oil and gas, securities, environmental matters, banking, transportation, intellectual property, and health care.

1988

THOMAS FROEHLE was appointed as vice president and general counsel at Indiana University. He has more than 30 years of experience advising corporations, universities, and government entities on complex legal, regulatory, and financing matters. Froehle also serves as chair emeritus at Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP in Indianapolis.

RAPHAEL PERPETUO M. LOTILLA, LLM, the former secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Department of Energy of the Philippines, has been named Philippine ambassador to the Holy See, the governing body of Vatican City and the Catholic Church. He presented his credentials to Pope Leo XIV at the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican in July.

1990

DAVID KAUFMAN joined the Cleary University board of trustees. He is a partner at Thompson Coburn LLP in Chicago, where he co-chairs the firm's national corporate and securities practice group. Kaufman also serves as chairman of the board for Zacks Trust.

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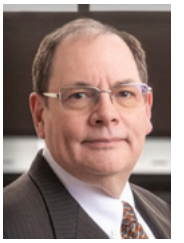


RANDALL "RANDY" KAY, an intellectual property trial lawyer at Jones Day, co-founded an intellectual property-focused chapter of the American Inns of Court in San Diego. He serves as the founding president and a master of the bench in the San Diego Intellectual Property American Inn of Court. The inn is an association of judges, lawyers, law professors, and law students who meet monthly for programs on intellectual property topics. Kay has been active in chapters of the American Inns of Court since 1992.



COLIN ZICK, a partner in the Boston office of Foley Hoag LLP, was appointed chair of the firm's privacy and data security practice. He also serves as chair of the health care compliance practice. His work often involves the intersection of health care and compliance issues in investigations, administrative proceedings, and litigation. Additionally, Zick received a Band 1 rating for health care law in Massachusetts from *Chambers USA*.

1991



MICHAEL B. STEWART was included on the IAM Patent 1000: The World's Leading Patent Professionals list for 2026. Stewart is the co-founder and a managing partner of Fishman Stewart PLLC in Troy, Michigan.



SAMUEL C. WISOTZKEY was appointed president of Kohner, Mann & Kailas SC in Milwaukee. His practice focuses on creditor representation in commercial insolvency, foreclosure, and workout matters. Wisotzkey joined the firm in 2002, has chaired the business and financial services group since 2022, and has been board certified in business bankruptcy law by the American Board of Certification since 2017.

1992

ROBERT L. GARRENGER III joined Chiesa Shahinian & Giantomasi PC (CSG Law) as a member of the firm's government and regulatory law group. Garrenger joined CSG Law after more than three decades of public service with the New Jersey state government.

Diane Dornburg, '76: Giving Children a Voice

By Annie Hagstrom

Diane Dornburg, '76, has spent her life and career rising to challenges and discovering her capacity for change-making. With more than 45 years of experience as a family law attorney, she was recently recognized with an Inspiring Advocate for Women Award at the 2026 Inspiring Women of Iowa fundraising event.

"My staff and board nominated me without my knowledge," she says. "I accepted it in front of 800 people, including my son and daughter-in-law, who were sitting with my colleagues. It's a great honor."

Dornburg is the managing attorney for the Iowa Center for Children's Justice (ICCJ) and has long advocated for survivors of domestic violence, low-income mothers, and families navigating complex custody matters. She leads child-centered, trauma-informed legal advocacy for children and families in high-conflict custody cases, mentors young women attorneys, and was involved in early work on a landmark Iowa Supreme Court case involving breastfeeding accommodations in the workplace.

This year marks Dornburg's 50th anniversary since graduating from Michigan Law.

Empowering youth

Dornburg spent two decades working as a supervising attorney in the family law unit at the Legal Aid Society of Polk County in Des Moines, Iowa, where she represented parents. She then went into private practice at Carney & Appleby PLC and began serving as guardian ad litem for children alongside representing parents. In 2019, Dornburg joined ICCJ, where she solely represents children in custody cases. "The more I represented kids, the less patience I had with parents," she says. "So, coming to my current position was a natural outcome."

Dornburg's work centers on three guiding principles: "I tell them, 'I am your voice,' 'You should never have to choose between your parents,' and 'What you tell me is between you and me,'" she says. "Those three things open the floodgates, and the kids feel empowered to talk."

In addition to her legal practice, she also oversees child-inclusive mediation as part of a team with other lawyers at ICCJ, acts as a parenting coordinator, is trained to do neutral evaluations of child custody cases, and serves as a child advocate in collaborative law cases.

Dornburg also served as the legislative chair of the Family & Juvenile Law Section of the Iowa State Bar for 20 years, and she is currently a member of the Association of Family & Conciliation Courts and the International Academy of Collaborative Professionals.



Diane Dornburg, '76, who has more than 45 years of experience as a family law attorney, received an Inspiring Advocate for Women Award at the 2026 Inspiring Women of Iowa fundraising event.

Seeing the impact

All while Dornburg was building her career, she also became a mother. In 1990, she completed training to become a special-needs adoptive parent, then a foster parent. In total, she has cared for 10 children—none of whom she gave birth to.

She says that between all the children she has parented, she saw firsthand nearly everything on the ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences Scale), which ranges from experiences with abuse and neglect to mental health struggles and more.

"Giving my kids the opportunity to have normal life experiences has been critical," says Dornburg. "It's equally critical to try to understand what it's like for the kid whose parent is an addict or in prison. I've lived with them, but I could also see them in a crowd of people and not be able to tell them apart from the rest. They are not determined by their experiences."

One of the most gratifying parts of Dornburg's work is seeing what her former clients have done in life since becoming adults. Some send Dornburg updates about their education and families, and one even began working at ICCJ.

"It's all because somebody listened to them and was willing to protect their privacy, but also advocate for what they're thinking, feeling, and how they want things to be," she says.

Rasmeet Chahil, '17: Climbing to New Heights in Her Career

By Claudia Capos

As an avid hiker, Rasmeet Chahil, '17, has faced daunting challenges and scaled lofty peaks, including Peru's Machu Picchu and Rainbow Mountain this summer.

That same perseverance has propelled her to new heights in her law career at New Jersey-based Lowenstein Sandler—where she was recently elevated to partner—and in her role as the current president of the Asian Pacific American Lawyers Association of New Jersey (APALA-NJ).

"I love practicing law, and I consider it a privilege to be part of the legal profession," Chahil says. "Becoming a partner at a big law firm is very fulfilling, and I want to build my own book of business."

Since joining the firm in 2017, she has represented large companies across a range of industries in commercial litigation, as well as internal investigations and white-collar defense matters. Each new client entails learning about an entirely new business and industry, something she says is both challenging and rewarding.

"As a partner, I now spend more time developing case strategy than I do writing court briefs," Chahil says. "In the future, I want to help our firm continue its nationwide expansion."

Staying involved with her community

Despite the demands of her practice, Chahil makes time to volunteer at APALA-NJ, where she found a warm sense of community after moving to New Jersey from her hometown in the Detroit area.

"Our organization is trying to get more people from Asian Pacific American backgrounds into judge and prosecutor positions in New Jersey," she says. "That representation is important, so that young lawyers can see someone who looks like themselves in a position of power."

When Chahil joined Lowenstein Sandler, the firm had no South Asian partners. Now it has several, including herself.

"I hope to be a role model for young people who are coming up," she says. As APALA-NJ president for the 2026–2027 term, she plans to provide additional resources, networking, and job opportunities for members, including law students.



Rasmeet Chahil, '17 (right), is partner at Lowenstein Sandler and president of the Asian Pacific American Lawyers Association of New Jersey.

A champion for people facing injustices

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Sikh community became a target for hate crimes and discrimination.

"I grew up seeing those injustices," Chahil says. "As a lawyer, I wanted to help people who needed a champion."

She also observed the prevalence of domestic violence in the South Asian community, including among those in her local community and extended family and friend circles.

Through her strong commitment to pro bono work, Chahil has represented many survivors of domestic violence in securing final restraining orders.

"You are literally saving someone's life," she says. "It can't get more important than that."

Chahil helps to run Lowenstein Sandler's domestic-violence program, and she now supervises cases and oversees the firm's associates, who gain valuable experience through this critical work.

Opening doors at Michigan Law

As the daughter of immigrants, Chahil faced an uphill climb in pursuing a law degree. There were no lawyers among her family or acquaintances, and no one to advise her on the nuts and bolts of obtaining a law degree and pursuing a law career.

"My parents didn't want me to go to law school, so I had to advocate for myself and show everyone, including them, what I could do," she says. "I often felt like the underdog."

Chahil prevailed and was accepted at Michigan Law in fall 2014. In retrospect, she says, her involvement in two clinics—one related to human trafficking issues and another that centered on civil and criminal litigation—afforded valuable real-world opportunities to represent clients and argue cases in court.

"I gained confidence and developed my legal skills," Chahil says. "When I started at Lowenstein Sandler, I had already been in court several times."

These days, she advises law students to go easy on themselves.

"I was stressed out in law school and worried about getting a job, but now I'm a partner at a big law firm," Chahil concludes. "Everything worked out."

THE HON. MICHAEL WARREN published *The Revolutionary Words That Forged America: The Definitive Guide to the Declaration of Independence* (Republic Book Publishers, 2026). The book provides a line-by-line analysis of the United States of America's charter, including its drafting, historical circumstances, underlying philosophy, and legal force. Judge Warren has served as a circuit court judge in Oakland County, Michigan, for 23 years and has presided over more than 420 jury trials. He also teaches business law at Wayne State University's Mike Ilitch School of Business.

1993



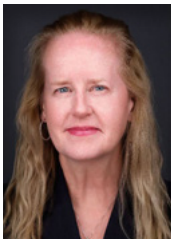
BETHANY A. BREETZ, a member at Stites & Harbison PLLC, was named to *Legal 500*'s 2026 US City Elite list of attorneys in Kentucky. Her practice focuses on federal and state appellate advocacy as well as complex commercial litigation, including matters involving financial institutions, real estate, and trusts and estates. Breetz is co-chair of the firm's appellate advocacy group.

RHONDA POWELL was appointed to the board of directors at the National Menopause Foundation as a director-at-large. Powell is the executive vice president, chief legal officer, and corporate secretary of the Strada Education Foundation, a national nonprofit focused on improving the connection between education and economic opportunity.



JEFFREY A. SHERMAN, a partner at Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP, was promoted to colonel in the Judge Advocate General's Corps of the US Army Reserve. He also was elected to the management board of Faegre Drinker.

1994



ANN-MARIE ANDERSON received her third Outstanding Leadership Award at the 2026 State Bar of Arizona Convention Securities Regulatory symposium. She is president of the Metropolitan Phoenix Phi Beta Kappa Society and chairperson for the Western US, and was the featured speaker at the 2026 Arizona State University Phi Beta Kappa induction ceremony. Anderson is the longtime general counsel of a national structural engineering and architectural corporation and is serving her third term as the elected chairperson of the Securities Regulatory Council. Anderson is senior counsel at Klinedinst PC.

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GEORG FROWEIN, LLM, participated in an annual memorial race organized by the Czech nonprofit organization Post Bellum. He participated in honor of the late Michigan Law Professor **ERIC STEIN, '42**, who was a pioneer of transnational legal development and the first to offer lectures on the law of European integration at Michigan Law. Frowein is a partner at Hengeler Mueller in Germany, where he advises on cross-border mergers and acquisitions as well as corporate reorganizations.

CYNTHIA L. SMITH received the Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature for editing *Legendary Frybread Drive-In: Intertribal Stories* (Heartdrum, 2025). The anthology also received the American Indian Youth Literature Award and an Odyssey Honor Award for the audio edition. Smith is an author-curator of the Heartdrum imprint at HarperCollins Children's Books and a faculty member at Vermont College of Fine Arts.

1995

THE HON. DAGMAR PLAZA-GONZALEZ was sworn in as a judge of the Civil Court of the City of New York, Kings County, at a ceremony at Brooklyn Law School in April.

1996

THE REV. FRED GRECO was elected as the sixth stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church in America by the denomination's general assembly. He serves as senior pastor of Christ Church in Katy, Texas.

1997

TIMOTHY M. PINTO, a clinical professor in the Legal Practice Program at Michigan Law, was appointed to Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect. He will represent attorneys involved in both civil and criminal court proceedings related to child abuse and neglect, including individuals involved with the defense as well as the prosecution of such cases.

1998

ERIKA L. BRYANT was sworn in as the 92nd president of the State Bar of Michigan in November. She is an attorney at Butler Davis PLLC in Detroit.

STEPHANIE HIPP received the Exelon Outstanding Corporate Counsel Award from the Chicago Bar Foundation. She is the general counsel of McDonald's Operating Company and senior counsel for the business counsel/franchise group at McDonald's Corporation. Hipp also has been an active member of the McDonald's pro bono committee for more than 10 years.

CLASS NOTES

1999

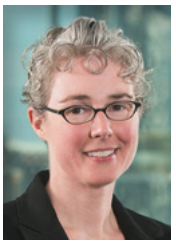
RUSSELL ABRUTYN was named the 2026 winner of the John W. Cummiskey Pro Bono Award by the State Bar of Michigan. He is the founder of Abrutyn Law PLLC, where he represents noncitizens, their families, and their employers in family and employment-based cases, green card applications, nonimmigrant visa applications, naturalization applications, removal and deportation defense, asylum applications, and federal litigation.

PATTY PETROWSKI was appointed to serve as vice president and general counsel of the University of Michigan for a two-year term by President Domenico Grasso. She previously served as the University's associate vice president and deputy general counsel and has been a key member of the Office of the General Counsel's leadership team since 2014.

ELLIOT M. REGENSTEIN recently published *Readiness: Preparing State Early Childhood Systems for a Brighter Future* (Harvard Education Press, 2026). He is a Chicago-based partner at Foresight Law + Policy. Regenstein has extensive experience in state-level policy and advocacy, with a particular focus on early learning. He has consulted with more than two dozen states on a wide range of education policy topics.

J. RANDAL WEXLER was reappointed as a member of the Illinois Finance Authority by Gov. J.B. Pritzker. Wexler is vice president, general counsel, and corporate secretary for Van Drunen Farms and FutureCeuticals. Wexler previously was a partner at Sidley Austin, where he managed complex litigation in the food, supplement, and drug sectors.

2000

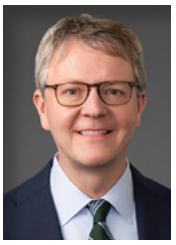


ALEXANDRA MACKAY was named to *Managing Intellectual Property* magazine's 2026 IP Stars list. She is a member of the Nashville, Tennessee, office of Stites & Harbison PLLC, where she counsels clients in intellectual property matters that include the selection, adoption, and registration of trademarks and copyrights.

STEVIE SWANSON returned to teaching at Florida's Cooley Law School after serving as a professor at Lincoln Memorial University Duncan School of Law in Knoxville, Tennessee. She has worked in legal education for 23 years and also has taught at Michigan Law and the Mitchell Hamline School of Law.

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2001



DANIEL KELLY joined Talen Energy in Houston as its general counsel and corporate secretary. In this role, he leads the company's legal, regulatory, and external affairs functions, oversees corporate governance, and serves as the primary point of contact for the board of directors in these areas.

ASIM REHMAN was appointed commissioner and chair of New York City's Business Integrity Commission by Mayor Zohran Mamdani. Rehman most recently led the New York City Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings as commissioner and chief administrative law judge. He also has held senior roles across New York City government, including at the Department of Investigation, the Law Department, and the Department of Correction, and has experience in private practice and financial institutions.

2003

SEAN M. LEWIS was sworn in as an assistant US attorney by the US Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida. He will serve in the office's Civil Rights Section within the Criminal Division. Lewis has nearly two decades of trial, appellate, and judicial experience, and he previously served as an assistant US attorney in both the District of Columbia and the Western District of Michigan.

NADIA SHIHATA was appointed by New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani to serve as commissioner of the Department of Investigation. She is the first woman of color to hold the position. Shihata has spent most of her legal career in public service, including more than 11 years as a federal prosecutor at the US Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York, where she held several senior leadership roles. In 2022, she co-founded a boutique law firm in New York City focused on civil rights and sexual misconduct matters, internal investigations, wrongful convictions, and criminal defense.

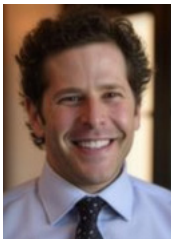
2004

ERIC EVANS joined Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton as a partner in the firm's Silicon Valley office. He represents leading technology companies in complex commercial litigation, including large-scale federal class actions involving false advertising, privacy, and antitrust claims. Evans also advises clients on trade secret protection and enforcement and helps companies navigate intricate data and information governance challenges.



AZADEH N. SHAHSHAHANI received the Human Rights & Immigrant Justice Leadership Award from the International Rescue Committee, as well as the Trailblazer Award from the Iranian American Bar Association's Washington, DC, chapter. Shahshahani is a legal and advocacy director at Project South, a nonprofit organization that focuses on social issues in the United States and Global South. She is the past president of the National Lawyers Guild.

2008



JUSTIN S. BROOKS joined Kleinbard LLC in Philadelphia as of counsel in the firm's litigation department. He focuses his practice on all aspects of complex business litigation, including qui tam suits under state and federal False Claims Acts, corporate governance and partnership disputes, class action defense, contract and business tort claims, trade secret misappropriation, and employment litigation.

JORDAN MARTELL joined Barrett McNagny LLP. He has 20 years of experience advising insurance and financial services organizations on complex legal, regulatory, governance, and risk management matters.



DAVID SILLERS received a Band 2 ranking for his nationwide defamation/reputation management practice from the 2026 *Chambers High Net Worth Guide*. Sillers is a partner at Hilgers PLLC, where he represents companies and successful individuals in high-stakes defamation, reputation management, and First Amendment matters across the country.

2009

KEVIN LEE was promoted to general counsel in the Arkansas Office of the Attorney General. Before he joined the office as deputy general counsel in 2025, Lee was a judge advocate in the US Army, in-house legal counsel for the New York Stock Exchange, and an associate at Milbank LLP in New York City.

2010

ANASTASIA STARK joined Aleto, a Chicago-based alternative investment platform, as chief operating officer. Before joining Aleto, Stark was an adviser to alternative asset managers and also was a partner in Duane Morris LLP's corporate practice group.

CARA WULF, a government contracts and regulatory compliance attorney, joined the construction and real estate litigation practice at Nixon Peabody LLP in Washington, DC. She previously was a partner at McCarter & English LLP.

2012

ZAKARIA DABONÉ, a research scholar at the Law School from 2011 to 2012, received the 2025 Henry Dunant Field Prize. He is a Burkinabe jurist, teacher, researcher, and practitioner of international humanitarian law based in Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso.

JEROME GALANG was named director of the Illinois Judicial College. He previously served eight years in the judicial education division and judicial college division of the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts. Most recently, Galang served as assistant division director at the Federal Judicial Center, where he oversaw the development and implementation of competency-based learning for the federal probation and pretrial services system.

2013



BRUNO CAMPOS joined Harris Beach Murtha's business litigation practice group as senior counsel. Campos handles all phases of complex commercial lawsuits, including bad faith litigation and putative class actions that have generated client recoveries in excess of $900 million. He is based in the firm's Stamford, Connecticut, office.

NICHOLAS J. "NICK" MONTEROSSO joined Brinkley Morgan as a partner in its Fort Lauderdale, Florida, office. He specializes in wealth transfer planning and representing corporate trustees. Monterosso's more than 10 years of experience includes roles as general counsel of a family-owned real estate development company and private practice at elite international law firms.

MATTHEW PARELMAN was named partner at Debevoise & Plimpton LLP, based in New York. He is a member of the insurance and financial institutions groups. Parelman advises clients on a broad range of transactions in the insurance industry, including mergers and acquisitions, pension risk transfer, investment management, reinsurance, and alternative capital vehicles.

CLASS NOTES

2014

JUDITH "JUDY" CONWAY was named the second vice president of the Illinois Bar Foundation. She is a trial attorney at Cooney & Conway, where she represents clients in serious personal injury and wrongful death cases, from the initial client introduction through trial and appeal.



SARAH OLIAI joined Foley Hoag LLP as a partner in the international trade and national security practice in the firm's Washington, DC, office. She specializes in advising clients on complex regulatory matters at the intersection of international trade and national security. Previously, Oliai practiced at Cooley LLP.



ROBERT WHITE joined Munsch Hardt Kopf & Harr PC as a shareholder in the firm's corporate and securities practice in Dallas. White also serves as outside counsel to businesses across a variety of industries, including health care, construction, and regulated home service providers, advising clients on governance disputes, financing arrangements, commercial agreements, and employee incentive planning.

2016

DAVID QUEROLI was elevated to director at Richards, Layton & Finger PA, where he focuses his practice on corporate restructuring, bankruptcy, and other insolvency matters.

2018

PATRICK T. MILLER joined the National Taxpayers Union Foundation in the organization's public interest litigation arm, the Taxpayer Defense Center. He previously worked as senior assistant attorney general in the Wyoming Attorney General's Office, representing various state boards and agencies.

2019



LINDSAY WARDLAW launched Wardlaw Trade Law, a boutique international trade law practice focused on export controls, sanctions, and customs matters. She also has joined the University of Michigan Law School's International Transactions Clinic as an adjunct clinical professor of law. Wardlaw also serves as an adjunct professor of law at Georgetown University Law Center.

2021

MITCHELL KOHL joined Rensch & Rensch Law in the firm's Omaha, Nebraska, car accident trial practice. He is an attorney and licensed physician, handling car accidents, truck accidents, workers' compensation, and medical malpractice matters throughout the state. Kohl is a fellow of the American College of Legal Medicine, and he previously practiced at Colorado's largest personal injury firm, worked for injury and malpractice firms in Detroit and Philadelphia, and was a deputy district attorney in Colorado.



FRANCIS N. TOLENTINO, LLM, was appointed as acting secretary of the Philippine Department of Labor and Employment by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. Previously, Tolentino served as majority floor leader of the Philippine Senate.

2022

ADITYA VEDAPUDI joined the legal team in the Executive Office of Gov. Gretchen Whitmer as associate legal counsel. He previously worked as an associate at Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP.

2024

A.J. MARINEAU joined the legal team in the Executive Office of Gov. Gretchen Whitmer as associate legal counsel. He previously served as a law clerk to Chief Justice Elizabeth Clement at the Michigan Supreme Court.

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David Blanchard, '03: Protecting Workers and Holding Government Agencies Accountable

By James Weir

For more than two decades, David Blanchard, '03, has represented Michigan workers in disputes related to discrimination, retaliation, wages, and other workplace issues. He also has spearheaded efforts that have helped reform the government systems that low-income workers depend on, including unemployment insurance. In recent years, some of these systems have fallen short in serving workers.

Earlier this year, Blanchard received the Michigan State Bar Foundation Access to Justice Award, which recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to improving legal resources and access for low-income families in Michigan.

"I feel very blessed to receive this recognition," he says. "It is really rewarding to follow your gut, do good work, and have that pay off for people at the same time."

A practice close to home

Blanchard clerked for a federal judge after graduating from the Law School and then returned to his hometown of Ann Arbor to join a local firm's employment law practice. He has worked alongside Angela Walker, '04, for more than 20 years, and in 2015 they set out on their own to found Blanchard & Walker, an employment law firm that now has offices in Ann Arbor and Lansing.

Blanchard represents employees across a wide range of employment issues, including wrongful termination, harassment, job accommodations, and whistleblower retaliation. He also has represented class and collective actions that make it possible for low-wage workers to pursue claims that might not be practical on an individual basis.

"These are workers who might be deprived of a minimum wage or have tips stolen from them, and if you're talking about 50 bucks taken from a restaurant worker every month, it's hard to make that work as an individual case," he says. "So these class and collective actions are an important mechanism for workers who have been cheated by their employers."

Addressing systemic issues

Blanchard's work representing the recently jobless also provided a window into the failings of the Michigan unemployment system. Many clients encountered difficulties obtaining or keeping unemployment benefits, and these challenges escalated after the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent recession.



David Blanchard, '03, received the Michigan State Bar Foundation Access to Justice Award in September.

"We started to see some systematic problems that were troubling and didn't add up to meaningful due process for people," he said. Blanchard began spearheading efforts to address some of these problems and filed what would become the first of many actions against the state unemployment insurance agency in 2013.

Problems with the agency became more pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic, when large numbers of Michiganders turned to the unemployment system for assistance. Some workers who received benefits were later notified that they had been overpaid and were required to repay the money.

These repayment demands led to *Saunders v. Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency*, a class action that Blanchard brought to challenge the agency's treatment of unemployment claimants and its collection of alleged overpayments.

In 2024, the Michigan Court of Claims ruled that certain agency practices violated claimants' due process rights, which ultimately led to a $55 million settlement in May 2025. In addition to monetary relief for affected claimants, the settlement required institutional changes to the unemployment system, including reforms involving notices, appeals, and procedures for collecting overpayments. The resolution also provided more than $1.6 million for Michigan's legal aid community and funded dedicated attorneys to support unemployment-related legal services.

A firm for good

Blanchard says that the firm has sought to combine a mission-driven practice with the private law-firm model. He also has emphasized mentoring younger lawyers through summer associate positions and opportunities to work on employment and public interest matters.

"Part of our mission at the firm is figuring out and communicating to the greater legal community that there are ways to do good work and public interest work within the free market, private attorney model," he says. "There's a path for doing really good public interest work and being able to get rewarded for that—and keep the lights on. And there are a lot of lawyers out there who can use this model to do good work."

IN MEMORIAM

1950s

Robert P. Tiernan, '52	4/26/2026
Ralph B. Guy, '53	4/20/2026
Marvin K. Jacobs, '53	6/08/2026
Robert M. Radner, '54	6/06/2026
William R. Jentes, '56	4/28/2026
Myron J. Resnick, '56	7/13/2026
Robert J. De Boer, '57	5/04/2026
Curtis D. Ireland, '58	6/26/2026
Michael J. Ryan, '58	12/17/2025
Marlin I. Zwicky, '58	6/15/2026
Wallace M. Handler, '59	6/04/2026

1960s

John E. Hanson, '60	5/05/2026
Dudley Hughes, '60	4/06/2025
Don R. Hunter, '60	5/09/2026
Marvin L. Wilenzik, '60	3/21/2026
Lewis G. Gatch, '61	4/28/2026
Mahlon H. Ortman, '61	5/27/2026
John C. Buchanan, '62	5/21/2026
Warren M. Laddon, '62	5/09/2026
Charles H. Miel, '62	4/13/2026
Russell G. Press, '62	4/26/2026
Irwin R. Rein, '62	6/18/2026
William W. Green, '63	4/01/2025
Arthur R. Loevy, '63	4/11/2026
Burton L. Raimi, '63	8/01/2026
Morris Tobin, '63	3/10/2026
Thomas W. Van Dyke, '63	4/26/2026
John E. Bos, '64	6/26/2026
Terrence J. Lilly, '64	6/07/2026
Joseph F. McDonald, '64	4/14/2026
Donald B. Corriere, '65	7/07/2026
David R. Cunningham, '65	4/15/2026
Leon E. Irish, '65	5/11/2026
Marco A. Jagmetti, '65	8/10/2025
James A. Quaremba, '65	4/18/2026
James G. Barnes, '66	11/01/2025
Richard F. Dole, '66	3/29/2026
Scott H. Engroff, '67	3/08/2026
Marshall L. Goldstein, '67	4/09/2026
Robert E. Guenzel, '67	2/08/2026
John C. Hartranft, '67	3/30/2026
Ronald G. Vantine, '67	5/19/2026
James W. Burdick, '68	4/09/2026
William A. Shaheen, '68	3/29/2026
Hugo Ibeas, '69	8/03/2026
Van H. Leichliter, '69	7/05/2026

1970s

Stephen F. Adamini, '70	4/29/2026
Doug R. Rendleman, '70	3/08/2026
R. Dell Ziegler, '70	7/08/2026
Laurence J. Kline, '71	6/20/2026
Richard B. Yuille, '72	7/28/2026
Kenneth L. Robinson, '73	4/25/2026
David W. Clark, '74	7/01/2026
Thomas J. Carlson, '75	4/06/2026
Denice F. Davis, '78	4/07/2026

1980s

Wayne D. Hillyard, '81	6/20/2025
David J. Langum, LLM '81, SJD '85	3/29/2026
Brian Easton, '82	3/17/2026
Steven R. Barth, '84	6/26/2026

1990s

Lorne L. Brown, '90	7/16/2026
Hugo A. Tettamanti, '94	2/25/2026
James A. Mitzelfeld, '96	4/25/2026

The Hon. Ralph B. Guy Jr., '53



The Hon. Ralph B. Guy Jr., '53, a former federal prosecutor and judge and founding member of the National Association of Former United States Attorneys (NAFUSA), died on April 20, 2026. He was 96.

Guy was born and raised in Detroit and received his undergraduate and law degrees at the University of Michigan. After Michigan Law, Guy practiced law with his father, a district court judge in Dearborn, Michigan, who had formerly served as the city's chief of police and president of its city council.

At 28, Guy entered public service and joined the city government in Dearborn, Michigan, where he served in a number of roles, including assistant corporation counsel and eventually corporation counsel. These positions ultimately led to his appointment to the Wayne County Board of Supervisors.

His career of federal service began when he became chief assistant to then-Detroit city councilman James Brickley. In 1970, Guy became the US attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan, a position he held for six years. From 1976 to 1985, he served on the US District Court and was later appointed by President Ronald Reagan to the US Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, where he served until 1994. Guy also served as a judge of the US Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court of Review from 1998 to 2006.

"He placed great emphasis on and participated in the education of law students and the improvement of lawyers' legal skills," NAFUSA wrote in its tribute to Guy. "He found time in his busy schedule to teach trial advocacy courses at the University of Michigan Law School, the National Institute for Trial Advocacy, and the United States Attorney General's Advocacy Institute. Colleagues and friends remember him as a mentor and a trailblazer who set high standards for those who followed in his footsteps."

Guy is survived by his wife of 37 years, Yvonne, and his two sons, James and David.

The Hon. Timothy P. Connors



The Hon. Timothy P. Connors, a longtime lecturer at the Law School and a retired Michigan state court judge, died on October 8. He was 72.

Judge Connors served on the bench from 1991 through 2024, including 11 years as a chief judge. He presided over cases in the civil and domestic divisions of the Washtenaw County Trial Court and handled the neglect and abuse docket for the Juvenile Court.

"Tim was the judge for so many of our clinical students, who regularly appeared before him," says Professor Vikek Sankaran, '01, who also co-taught with Connors for five years. "He treated them with kindness and respect while also pushing them to be better, and he told them at every opportunity that integrity and credibility were the foundations of any good lawyer."

Connors also served as co-chair of the Michigan Tribal-State-Federal Forum, was a judge pro tem for the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, and was the presiding judge of the Washtenaw County Peacemaking Court. He incorporated peacemaking principles, philosophies, and procedures shared by tribal communities into state court justice systems.

"Tim did more work to legitimate tribal justice systems as a state court judge and occasional tribal judge than just about anyone," says Professor Matthew L.M. Fletcher, '97.

At the Law School, Connors taught Peacemaking in State Court Justice Systems as well as courses in civil and family trial advocacy.

Connors received many awards throughout his career, most recently the 2026 Judicial Excellence Award from the litigation section of the State Bar of Michigan. In 2021, he received a lifetime achievement award from the Michigan Supreme Court for his service to Michigan's families and children.

IN MEMORIAM

William Robert "Bill" Jentes, '56

William Robert "Bill" Jentes, '56, a renowned corporate litigator, philanthropist, and Michigan Law professor, died on April 28, 2026. He was 93.

Jentes was born in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and raised in Elmhurst, Illinois. He earned both his undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Michigan, where he met his wife, Janet. He later served in the US Navy at the Naval Station Great Lakes in North Chicago.



The couple moved abroad during their first year of marriage after he received a Fulbright Scholarship in comparative law at the University of Grenoble, France. They returned to Chicago one year later, where he joined Kirkland & Ellis LLP. There, he served as a principal litigating partner for nearly 40 years, during which he acted as lead trial and appellate counsel on significant business, commercial, and corporate matters. In 2004, he left the firm to establish an independent practice as an arbitrator and mediator of domestic and international disputes.



Bill Jentes, '56, and his wife, Janet, at the Distinguished Alumni Award ceremony in Chicago in 2017.

Jentes served as chair, sole arbitrator, or panel member in more than 60 domestic and international arbitrations administered by the American Arbitration Association, its International Centre for Dispute Resolution, the ICC International Court of Arbitration, the London Court of International Arbitration, and the CPR International Institute for Dispute Prevention & Resolution, plus several ad hoc proceedings.

In addition to his legal practice, Jentes taught at Michigan Law from 1991 to 2008 and served as an adviser to a number of Law School deans. He also served on fundraising committees during capital campaigns and championed the establishment of the Kirkland & Ellis Professorship, a collective gift from Michigan Law alumni at Kirkland & Ellis toward the campus expansion and renovation project; and the Jentes Scholarship Fund, which provides merit-based scholarships to nine outstanding law students each year. In 2017, Jentes received the Distinguished Alumni Award, Michigan Law's highest honor. "Bill was generous in his philanthropy as well as in the time he devoted to the Law School as a passionate volunteer, says Mary Buikema, assistant dean for development and alumni relations. "The campaign that he led among his colleagues at Kirkland provided critical support for the campus expansion and renovation project, and through the Jentes Scholarship, he has helped the Law School recruit the best and brightest students. To date, his fund—which will live in perpetuity—has supported more than 60 students. This is an incredible legacy with a ripple effect that will continue to be seen in the great work that Jentes Scholars go on to do."

He is survived by his daughter, Justine.

Theodore J. St. Antoine, '54



Theodore J. "Ted" St. Antoine, '54, whom his students often called "the Saint," died on October 7, 2026. He was 97.

He graduated *summa cum laude* from Fordham College. At Michigan Law, he was editor-in-chief of the *Michigan Law Review* and co-winner of the 1953 Campbell Moot Court Competition. After a Fulbright Fellowship in London, he was an Army JAG officer in the Pentagon during the Korean War, receiving the Army Commendation Medal.

St. Antoine practiced in Washington, DC, at a firm that represented the AFL-CIO and various labor unions. His practice was chiefly before the US Supreme Court. He was part of a board investigating Teamsters president Jimmy Hoffa and worked on legislation alongside then-Senator John F. Kennedy and, later, then-Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy.

He returned to Ann Arbor as a member of the faculty in 1965, teaching labor and employment law until his retirement in 1998. He was co-editor of a leading casebook, *Labor Relations Law: Cases and Materials*, through its 13th edition.

From 1971 to 1978, St. Antoine served as dean of the Law School. In a 2015 conversation for *Law Quadrangle*, he said he'd had severe misgivings about his candidacy and almost withdrew his name. But "I just couldn't say 'no' to colleagues if they wanted me." As dean, St. Antoine led the effort to design, fund, and begin construction on the Allan F. and Alene Smith Law Library Addition, opened in 1981.

"As dean, he pushed the faculty to hire women and minorities, and I was a direct beneficiary," says Chris Whitman '74, the Francis A. Allen Collegiate Professor Emerita of Law and the first woman hired to the faculty, in 1976. "I particularly appreciate the grace with which he helped me negotiate the issues, large and small, that I faced as a young woman in what was, but is no longer, a very male institution."

St. Antoine was a part-time labor arbitrator for 50 years and a president of the National Academy of Arbitrators. He also was editor of the academy's *The Common Law of the Workplace: The Views of Arbitrators*.

In 2015, more than a dozen alumni working at Seyfarth Shaw LLP, known for its labor and employment law practice, contributed to endow a professorship in St. Antoine's name. Camille Olson, '83, led the fundraising effort. "Ted conveyed in real terms how all the issues we discussed in class affected individuals in all sectors of society," she said when the professorship was announced. "Wherever my work takes me, if Michigan Law comes up, someone always mentions the Saint. People on all sides of the table respect him greatly, which is a rare gift."

Richard Primus, the inaugural holder of the Theodore J. St. Antoine Collegiate Professorship, says, "Ted continuously demonstrated that one can be warm and genial while also being hard-working and intellectually sharp. When I first arrived at Michigan as a junior professor, I was assigned an office next to Ted's, and the proximity was a gift. He was a former dean and a top-flight arbitrator but never too busy to make the new kid feel valued and welcome. He gave me my first Michigan football ticket, and he treated me to meals—the latter, he explained, because he liked to tell his economist friends that he had falsified the proposition that there is no such thing as a free lunch."

In 2021, Steven Fetter '79, and his wife, Bonnie, made a gift to the Law School to dedicate a garden in St. Antoine's honor in the Quad. "Ted took a chance by lifting me from the middle of the class to help update his casebook, and was there for me for the next 50 years. My career would not have been the same without Ted's support, including candid advice I didn't necessarily want to hear."



"The warm tributes that have poured in are a testament to Ted's influence on his colleagues and students," says Dean Neel U. Sukhatme. "I am sorry that our paths did not cross for longer, but I am grateful for his contributions to the Law School for so many years."

St. Antoine was predeceased by his wife of 53 years, Elizabeth, "Lloyd." He is survived by four children and their spouses, seven grandchildren, and a sister.

A²Z

WITH DEAN Z



Dean Z Signs Off the Airwaves

"Hi, I'm the dean of admissions at the University of Michigan Law School. I'm speaking to you today from my basement, with my COVID hair, because I'm starting on a new project: I want to give the best admissions advice I can come up with to you for free."

So said Sarah C. Zearfoss, '92, in the first episode of A2Z, a law school admissions podcast that sought to close the informational gap between those with resources and connections in the law and those without them.

"Michigan is a public law school, and I'm a public school kind of gal," Zearfoss told the audience. "I think high-quality public education at every level is the thing we need in our country."

More than six years and millions of views later, Zearfoss—who will retire at the end of the 2026–2027 academic year—recorded her final episode in September. As the end of the recording session approached, she was surprised by more than 100 colleagues and students who filed into the classroom and delivered Michigan Law's traditional "clap-out."

After the resounding applause died down, Zearfoss concluded the podcast with her familiar sign-off.

"Wherever you go, Go Blue!"

124
EPISODES OF A2Z

141,240+
PODCAST DOWNLOADS

1,224,800+
TOTAL YOUTUBE VIEWS

155,080+
HOURS WATCHED ON YOUTUBE

1.7 MILLION *views*
MOST VIRAL A2Z TIKTOK
(an "app read," her critique of an anonymous application to the Law School)



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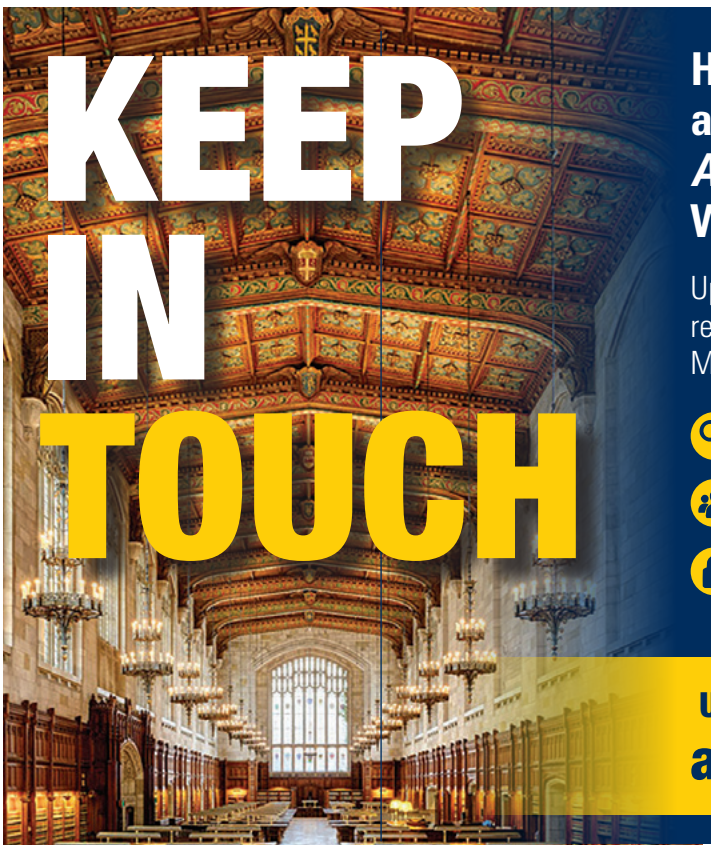
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