

# Criminal Law

## Theme Introduction

By Josh Blanchard

It is an interesting and exciting time to practice criminal law. On a national scale, we're seeing political shifts that are impacting prosecution priorities, both in criminal and closely related immigration matters. On the state level, we have a progressive attorney general-elect and governor-elect who are certain to change Michigan's policy direction. The citizens have spoken and have ended the prohibition against marijuana. After five years of diligent work and much opposition, we are finally seeing the benefit of the planning and policy work by the Michigan Indigent Defense Commission as communities around the state roll out new public defender offices. There is also a concerted effort on both sides of the courtroom to see sensible and much-needed bail reform.

The State Bar of Michigan Criminal Law Section strives to help its members stay abreast of the changes in criminal law by providing top-notch educational programming that presents a balanced view from the various criminal justice stakeholders. Our section of almost 2,400 members is comprised mostly of prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges, but also includes legislators, law clerks, paralegals, law students, academics, and probation, parole, and police officers.

After 41 years at the same venue, next month marks the first time we're hosting the mid-winter conference at Soaring Eagle Casino. We chose the new venue to help make the conference accessible to more of our members. We plan to use this conference to update members on some of the recent significant developments in criminal law. We also expect Attorney General-Elect Dana Nessel to open the conference with a keynote address.

In June, we'll host our popular biennial policy conference in Frankenmuth. The particulars are still in the works, but topics and other details will soon be announced in our newsletter. The annual meeting and program, held in conjunction with the SBM NEXT Conference, will be offered in late September at the Suburban Collection Showplace in Novi.

We're proud to present our first criminal-law-themed *Bar Journal* in more than 10 years. We have updates on developments in pretrial release and the argument for elimination of money bail, lessons learned from the 2014 merger of the Michigan Assigned Appellate Counsel System and the State Appellate Defender Office, and updates from both the prosecution and defense on the resentencing process for juvenile lifers.

On behalf of the Criminal Law Section Council, I'd like to thank the State Bar for its support of the section; past chair Hon. William Caprathe, who led the committee that brought this special edition to fruition; and the authors who contributed articles. I would also like to extend a warm invitation to any member of the Bar with an interest in criminal law topics to join the section or attend one of our upcoming seminars. ■



*Josh Blanchard, a member at Blanchard Law, practices in the areas of criminal defense and civil rights. He is the chair of the SBM Criminal Law Section, a director of the Criminal Defense Attorneys of Michigan, and cofounder of the Darrow listserv.*