

UpFront

By Mike Eidelbes

Federal Bar Chapter Panel Discussion Mirrors Themes of Recent *Bar Journal* Issues

Two 2019 *Michigan Bar Journal* theme issues served as a timely lead-in to a November pro bono event hosted by the Western District of Michigan chapter of the Federal Bar Association in conjunction with the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Michigan.

The inaugural POWER Act meeting at the Gerald R. Ford Federal Building in Grand Rapids on November 13 brought together approximately 30 attorneys to highlight the pressing need for pro bono service on behalf of survivors of domestic violence, especially on Native American reservation lands. Domestic violence and American Indian law were the focus of the July and August 2019 issues of the *Michigan Bar Journal*, respectively.

The Federal Bar Association chapter organized the event in response to Congress passing the POWER Act in 2018. Formally titled the Pro Bono Work to Empower and Represent Act of 2018, it directs the chief judge in every federal court district to promote pro bono legal efforts for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. It also requires judicial districts containing Native American tribes or tribal organizations to conduct a similar event at least once every two years with a focus on those communities.

Highlighting the event was a panel discussion centered around both issues. Participants included Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians Chief Judge Allie Greenleaf Maldonado; Elinor Jordan, senior program



Courtesy photo

Brian Lennon (far left), president of the Western District of Michigan chapter of the Federal Bar Association, is pictured with POWER Act panelists (left to right) Elinor Jordan, senior program manager of the Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence's Survivor Law Clinic; legal advocate Charlie Campbell and crisis advocate Suzanne Katerberg from the YWCA of West-Central Michigan; Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians Chief Judge Allie Greenleaf Maldonado; and U.S. District Court Chief Judge and panel moderator Robert Jonker.

manager of the Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence's Survivor Law Clinic; and legal advocate Charlie Campbell and crisis advocate Suzanne Katerberg from the YWCA of West-Central Michigan. U.S. District Court Chief Judge Robert Jonker moderated the proceedings.

The Western District of Michigan chapter hopes the POWER Act meeting becomes an annual event. ■

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