

**STATE BAR OF MICHIGAN  
2013-2014 COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT  
LAW AND THE MEDIA COMMITTEE**

**Article VI §6, Bylaws of the State Bar of Michigan**

*No later than May 1 of each year, the chair of each committee and subentity of the Bar, with the assistance of the staff liaison, shall report to the Executive Director on a form provided by the State Bar on the activities and accomplishments of the committee or subentity.*

**Committee Name:** Law and the Media

**Jurisdiction:** Develop, recommend, and support programs that promote a positive relationship between the law and the media.

Study and identify sources of friction between the courts, lawyers, and the electronic and print press, and recommend solutions.

**Chair(s) and Committee Members:**

Officer	Name	Address	Telephone	Email
Chair	Thomas H. Howlett	Googasian Firm PC 6895 Telegraph Rd Bloomfield Hills, MI 48301-3185	(248) 540-3333	thowlett@googasian.com
Staff Liaison	Nancy Brown		(517) 346-6350	<a href="mailto:nbrown@mail.michbar.org">nbrown@mail.michbar.org</a>
Staff Liaison	Samantha Meinke		(517) 346-6332	<a href="mailto:smeinke@mail.michbar.org">smeinke@mail.michbar.org</a>
Commissioner Liaison				
Representative Assembly Liaison	Victoria A. Vuletich			

Member/Advisor/Other	Member/Advisor/Other
David Ashenfelter, non-Bar member	Neil J. Lehto, member
Brett DeGroff, member	Elizabeth M. Madigan, member
Douglas I. Durfee, member	Tracey M. Martin, member
Abigail Elias, member	Naomi N. Oglesby, member
Elizabeth A. Favaro, member	Hal G. Ostrow, member
Victoria E. Green, member	Patrick Shellenbarger, non-Bar member
Robin Luce Herrmann, member	Lori K. Shemka, member

**Committee Meeting Schedule:**

Please attach any additional information needed regarding Committee meetings as an addendum.

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Meeting Type	Date	Location
<b>Description</b>		
Conference call	November 20, 2013	
Conference call	January 22, 2014	
Conference call	March 19, 2014	
Conference call	May 14, 2014	

**Resources provided by the State Bar of Michigan in support of committee work:**

Helping to arrange and coordinate seminars, prepare and provide materials for seminars, prepare media kits, administer the entire McCree Awards process from the initial announcement to post-banquet publicity.

**McCree Award process:**

**November:** Review and do brochure announcing competition. Find judges for the contest.

**Early December:** Send press release and pdf of brochure statewide. We had 822 news outlets that we emailed to this year including dailies, weeklies, legals, cable, TV and radio stations. Also mailed printed brochures to 150 selected news outlets. We also disseminated information via social media sites, SBM publications, and the SBM website.

**Early January:** Formal invitation extended to judges. We have three judges each year – their identities remain confidential.

Get in touch with contacts at the journalism school at MSU to touch base about the banquet. is the contact for the banquet. She will want the names of the winners sometime in March. Also get in touch with the Bar president and executive director to reserve banquet date.

**February:** Let awards supplier know that the awards are coming up again. Awards needed two weeks prior to banquet. Let supplier know that we would like to add the year to the award.

Send out reminder news release about the upcoming submission deadline – give journalists one last change to enter the contest.

**Mid February is submission dateline.** Organize entries into four packets – three go to judges one stays in-house. Send judging criteria and score sheet along with entries to the judges. Try to give judges about 2-3 weeks to judge.

**Mid-March:** When score sheets are back, total the number of points received by each entry. Refer to list on how winners are decided. Determine winners. Let committee members know the results at the teleconference.

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**3<sup>rd</sup> week in March** – Order awards and give supplier the names of the winners, and media outlet name. Send thank you notes/gift to the judges. Inform winners by letter.  
Phone winners – get bio for press release and correct spelling of name.

Send email to non winners

Invite to special guests – Law & Media committee chair and members, Bar President and Executive Director of the State Bar

***April – Awards Banquet***

Write speech for president

Send memo to president and email instructions to winners

Bring awards to banquet and set up

Take photos and do follow up publicity in SBM publications, on SBM website, and on social media sites.

**Seminar support:**

SBM staff also prepares the handouts to be given out at all of the newsroom and dealing with the media seminars. Basically, kits are printed and assembled in packages by staff, and then delivered to the seminar, where staff offers support. Staff also participates in the seminar by offering help as media relations staff to both reporters and attorneys. Staff handle whatever audio/visual needs there are for the seminar – setting up requests for A/V equipment, and making sure it is all functioning on site.

**Website support:**

SBM staff updated the Law & Media portion of the website for the committee to make it work better for visitors by adding a pdf of a Guide to Legal terms booklet that can be downloaded for free now, rather than only purchased in printed form. SBM Staff also made committees easier to find based on a suggestion made by this committee – by putting committees on the home page of the website, along with sections. Now both sections and committees are available to find from the home page of the website.

**Committee Activities:**

This year committee divided into three subcommittees: McCree Awards subcommittee, Seminars Subcommittee, and Program Review Subcommittee.

**McCree Subcommittee:** The members found three judges for the contest, and worked to promote the contest to journalists across the state on social media, by making phone calls and sending emails to their contacts in journalism, and by attending journalism conferences and passing on materials about the contest.

Because of their efforts we got an outstanding turnout in the contest, and the committee granted three McCree Awards to the following groups:

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The first McCree Award will go to WXYZ-TV's investigative journalism team, including **Ross Jones, Randy Lundquist, Ann Mullen, Ramon Rosario, and Johnny Sartin**. Their series of reports called "Guilty and Gone" looked into the serious problem of felons in Wayne County running and hiding for years after being arrested and convicted of violent crimes. Over one 120-day stretch during the WXYZ investigation, judges continued the bond of 77 guilty men and women, who skipped their sentencing dates and remained free. In one case, a man who was convicted of sexually assaulting his 12-year-old daughter for nearly two years fled while he was out on bond, even though state law says he should have been kept in jail to await sentencing. In another case, a man who was sentenced to 12 years in prison for armed robbery, was released for six more weeks, and on the day of his sentencing he shot and killed a 30-year-old husband and father. One judge is facing disciplinary charges before the Michigan Supreme Court, and legislators from Wayne County are pushing for changes to state law to keep violent offenders from escaping their prison sentences.

The second McCree Award goes to Detroit Free Press Reporter **Jim Schaefer**, for an experimental live blog project that ran during the entire six months of the Kwame Kilpatrick corruption trial. The blog utilized a variety of multimedia tools to not only inform readers of what was happening live as it happened all day, each day during the trial, but also created a community of hundreds of concerned citizens who began interacting with Schaefer and other Free Press staffers, and actually began improving the blog by contributing questions and information for each other. In the process, they became inspired by the blog to learn much more about how the legal system works. This group, that dubbed itself "Bloggerville," actually gathered together in person after the trial ended to share their experiences and raise money for charity. On a regular basis, the blog had up to 18,000 unique daily visitors. On verdict day, the blog got more than four million page views from desktop computers, the mobile website, and through the Free Press mobile apps. That day, over 674,000 unique visitors learned of the verdict through the blog.

The third McCree Award will go to a team of MLive Media Group journalists, including **John Barnes, Fritz Klug, Scott Levin, John Agar and Gus Burns**, who put together a series that analyzed 10 years of serious crime and police manpower reports, and discovered something unexpected. Even as police ranks dwindled across the state, Michigan's people had never been safer. The analysis covered more than 500 departments and 2.3 million reported crimes in Michigan. The MLive team created a database that let readers compare their local crime and police trends to those in other communities across the state. The team then ran statewide scaled stories in the series in all eight of MLive's newspapers and on their digital sites. Sidebars with specific data to local communities ran exclusively in their respective newspapers and sites.

**Seminars Subcommittee:** Met via teleconference twice this year to attempt to schedule many newsroom seminars. One hopeful seminar at MLive in Grand Rapids did not work out. A seminar did take place at the Michigan Broadcasters Association conference in Lansing on March 11, and it went well. Robin Luce-Herrmann moderated a panel that consisted of Elizabeth Favaro and Naomi Oglesby (two former broadcast journalists who are now attorneys) – and both of them discussed the five things they know now. This seminar was scheduled by Neil Lehto. A second newsroom seminar is tentatively scheduled at the Lansing State Journal in early June. This seminar is being set up by Pat Shellenbarger and Tom Howlett.

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**Program Review Subcommittee:** Met via conference call three times this year to create a plan for how to reach journalists and lawyers better in the future, and help them understand each other better.

This subcommittee identified some key things that seminars haven't been doing as well as they could be in the past few years, starting with the fact that they haven't been well attended. One problem may be that the committee has tended to segregate the groups (journalists and lawyers), instead of encouraging them to come together. So the subcommittee recommends that the overall committee develop a roundtable discussion-style event that would be well-attended and open to all. More specifically, the idea is to host a networking hour followed by a roundtable discussion program with some members of the media talking with some legal professionals about a feature story. One example of a feature story would be the Kwame Kilpatrick story – you can have some of the journalists involved in reporting a story and some of the legal professionals involved in the case, talking about the case/story from each of their perspectives. It is expected that the event would have roughly six people sitting at a table with an emcee with an opportunity for some questions from the audience. There would be a need for post-event follow-up to keep the groups engaged afterward, via things like website updates. The next step is going to be figuring out what time of year this could be held so that it wouldn't conflict with other events and how to figure out what feature stories to use.

**Future Goals and Activities:**

Continue developing McCree Awards and Seminars (which will perhaps be morphing into roundtable discussions) into the future.

**Other Information:**