


# Michigan's Lawyer-Legislators of the *97th State Legislature*

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It is with pleasure that we continue a tradition of presenting the lawyer-legislators at the start of each legislative term. For the 2013–2014 term, 17 lawyer-legislators will serve Michigan in our state's capitol.

The short biographical and committee assignment information was compiled with the assistance of each lawyer-legislator. The lawyer-legislators were also invited to respond to the same questions; their responses are included below the informational data.

If you wish to contact a legislator by mail, address state senators to: The Honorable (full name), State Senator, State Capitol, P.O. Box 30036, Lansing, MI 48909-7536. Mail to state representatives should be addressed to: The Honorable (full name), State Representative, State Capitol, P.O. Box 30014, Lansing, MI 48909-7514.

## Senator Steven M. Bieda (D-9, Warren)



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Bar Admit Date: May 21, 1993  
Law Schools: University of Detroit Mercy  
School of Law; LLM Tax Law, Wayne State  
University Law School

Standing Committees: Energy and Technology; Finance (Minority Vice Chair); Insurance; Judiciary (Minority Vice Chair); Redistricting (Minority Vice Chair)

Statutory Standing Committees: Legislative Council;  
Michigan Capitol Committee

### How did your legal training and/or experience as a lawyer influence your choice to enter public service?

As far as my choice to enter public service, I believe that the biggest influence was my family, particularly my parents, who were always active in community affairs without ever running for political office themselves. I learned to appreciate the concept of giving back to the community at a young age, and I think this experience, more than anything, instilled in me the desire to run for public office. My decision to pursue a legal career was probably similarly inspired. And many of the people in public service who inspired me, whether they were historical figures or contemporaries, happened to be attorneys.

### Politicians and lawyers frequently suffer from a bad public image despite the many positive contributions both make to society. How do you think the public image of lawyers can be improved?

If I knew the answer to this question I would probably be working (and making a lot of money) as a director of a P.R. firm. This issue isn't new at all; it's really part of our culture, and some of the negative public perception of attorneys is because of an aversion to controversy and confrontation. The fact that most individuals don't interact with the legal profession until there is a major issue in their lives—such as divorce, criminal cases, tort actions, etc.—is perhaps another reason, especially since these tend to be unhappy life events. I think the State Bar does a good job policing against bad actors in the field, but when there is a problem it tends to reinforce negative impressions. Yet, despite this general impression, our nation's law schools are experiencing record enrollments, and as a career, attorney jobs are considered highly desirable. Television shows focusing on the legal profession are also very popular with the general public. Perhaps one

of the issues lawyers should consider in improving their public image is doing more to advertise their significant pro bono work and the work they do in protecting the rights of individuals in a number of different contexts. Lawyers drafted the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution and had significant roles in battles over women's suffrage, civil rights, and environmental and consumer protections, to name but a few contributions to society. At the end of the day, the best we can do is to police ourselves against the bad actors within our profession, continue our work to improve society, and not be overly sensitive about public opinion.

### Is there a particular area of the law you hope to modify or change?

I have previously sponsored legislation signed into law to create the Legal Defense Fund Act and the Revocation of Paternity Act, and have worked to create more transparency in government by expanding the Freedom of Information Act and the Open Meetings Act. I am keenly interested in how these new statutes work, and will be monitoring any issues relating to this legislation. This session, I have reintroduced a bill to provide compensation to individuals wrongfully convicted (Michigan being in the minority of states that provide no relief to those who unjustly lost their freedom) as well as a proposed constitutional amendment to remove the requirement that state judges cannot run for election after they reach the arbitrary age of 70. I think Michigan's consumer protection acts need to be reviewed, and I've reintroduced legislation to remove the so-called drug immunity act. These bills and others I sponsor can be found at <http://www.MichiganLegislature.org>.

## Senator Tory M. Rocca (R-10, Sterling Heights)



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Bar Admit Date: May 11, 2000  
Law School: University of Michigan  
Law School

Standing Committees: Banking and Financial Institutions; Families, Seniors and Human Services (Majority Vice Chair); Judiciary; Regulatory Reform (Chair)

Statutory Standing Committee: Legislative Council



## Senator Tonya Schuitmaker

(R-20, Lawton)



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 Bar Admit Date: November 8, 1993  
 Law School: Michigan State University  
 College of Law  
 Standing Committees: Appropriations;  
 Energy and Technology; Health Policy;  
 Judiciary (Majority Vice Chair)

Statutory Standing Committee: Legislative Council

Appropriations Subcommittees: Capital Outlay (Majority Vice Chair);  
 Community Colleges (Majority Vice Chair); Higher Education (Chair);  
 Judiciary (Majority Vice Chair)

### How did your legal training and/or experience as a lawyer influence your choice to enter public service?

As a practicing attorney, I was able to see firsthand how legislation that seems initially promising can have unintended consequences, especially when implemented into real-world settings. I realized I could use my experience to offer valuable input to the process. Legislators without legal backgrounds do not necessarily understand how legislation that is passed will be worked out in the courtroom. There are considerations that an attorney who studies these laws day in and day out understands better than someone who does not.

### Politicians and lawyers frequently suffer from a bad public image despite the many positive contributions both make to society. How do you think the public image of lawyers can be improved?

I think lawyers need to make a special effort to get involved with causes that really bring people together. The same goes for politicians. How often do we hear the words “politician” and “bickering” in the same sentence? It’s time for thoughtful leadership. Two of my biggest legislative accomplishments last year were the senior protection package and the crime victims’ rights package. These major pieces of legislation received overwhelming bipartisan support and made a real difference in the lives of our most vulnerable citizens.

### Is there a particular area of the law you hope to modify or change?

I hope and expect to see some headway made on a number of issues. We need to make real progress in updating Michigan’s indigent defense system, which is widely understood to be flawed. I will be introducing a legislative package later this term aimed

at combating sexual assault. Legislation from last term designed to reduce truancy among students and better clarify insurable interests of trustees will be reintroduced. I will also follow up on a previous public act regarding collection of DNA from criminals.

## Senator Gretchen Whitmer

Senate Democratic Leader

(D-23, Lansing)



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Bar Admit Date: November 9, 1998  
 Law School: Michigan State University  
 College of Law

Standing Committee: Governmental Operations  
 (Minority Vice Chair)

Statutory Standing Committees: Legislative Council; Senate Fiscal Agency  
 Board of Governors

### How did your legal training and/or experience as a lawyer influence your choice to enter public service?

While a law degree is not a prerequisite for service in the legislature, it is certainly helpful. Lawyers are uniquely positioned to not only help the men and women of Michigan, but the state as a whole, and entering public service is a logical progression. Advocacy, practical knowledge of the application of our laws, and the ability to negotiate are all skills inherent in the practice of law and equally effective in the making of our laws. Legal training better equips us for the practical and legal analysis of the thousands of bills introduced every year. I have approached public policy with the same vigor that drew me to law in the first place, and I am proud to continue fighting every day to make sure the intrinsic rights of every citizen are properly upheld.

### Politicians and lawyers frequently suffer from a bad public image despite the many positive contributions both make to society. How do you think the public image of lawyers can be improved?

One issue with which I am personally concerned is the political rhetoric about “activist judges” and “greedy lawyers” with regard to a number of issues ranging from gay marriage to tort reform. These vitriolic phrases do a disservice to everyone in our profession. Like legislators, unfortunately, bad actors generate headlines and good actors rarely get acknowledgement. While there is much debate to be had on these and other issues of the day, it is critical that we conduct ourselves with decorum, particularly when debating and referring to one another. Additionally, I think

lawyers and elected officials have to disregard some of the negative perception out there and continue to do as much good work as possible. The simplest way to improve negative perception is to do positive things. We have to look at how we can give back to the community in compassionate and constructive ways. Whether it is pro bono work or volunteering with different organizations and committees, I think charity work is an excellent way for us to use our abilities, experiences, and prominence to bring attention to important causes and assist those in need.

### Is there a particular area of the law you hope to modify or change?

While I try to focus on any areas of law that will help Michigan citizens, my primary area of interest is on policy that will improve our state's future, both economically and socially. The most significant piece of legislation I have worked on in recent years would do both. The Michigan 2020 Plan would reduce the state's current tax credits and expenditures and use that money to allow every Michigan high school graduate—whether they attended public or private school or were homeschooled—to attend college for free. Students would have to attend a public college or university, and the amount they receive would be relative to their time in Michigan. As we simultaneously look to improve our economy and reduce the exorbitant debt college students are burdened with upon graduation, this plan would enable all students to attend college regardless of their economic standing. They would get the education they need to prepare them for the jobs of tomorrow, and it also would provide businesses with the talent pool they desire and serve as an incentive for them to locate and hire in Michigan.

### Representative Philip M. Cavanagh (D-10, Redford)



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Bar Admit Date: May 11, 1999  
Law School: University of Detroit Mercy  
School of Law

Standing Committees: Financial Liability  
Reform (Minority Vice Chair); Military and  
Veterans Affairs

### How did your legal training and/or experience as a lawyer influence your choice to enter public service?

Having gone to law school later in life (age 35-38), I learned the law by associating concepts with real-life situations instead of simply memorizing information. I practice as a probate attor-

ney, assisting the handicapped, and as a defense attorney, protecting the rights of the accused. I bring my legal training and life experiences to my job as a state representative. With every vote, I reflect on how the proposed change in policy will affect the less fortunate or those trying to play by the rules and provide for their families.

### Politicians and lawyers frequently suffer from a bad public image despite the many positive contributions both make to society. How do you think the public image of lawyers can be improved?

Although it's easy for lawyers and politicians to be the butt of jokes and sarcasm—some quite humorous—both professions really are valued and respected by society. We can improve our image, though, by not just avoiding wrongdoing, but by avoiding any potential appearance of impropriety. Even though we sometimes disagree on policy, nearly every politician I have met truly believes that public service is an honor and wants to do what they think is best for their constituents. It is those few who take advantage of or corrupt the system that give it a negative image for all. Politicians and lawyers should live by and be held to the highest ethical standards.

### Is there a particular area of the law you hope to modify or change?

With recent, horrific, highly publicized mass shootings, there is a lot of talk about gun control. I believe this needs to be addressed, but the larger, more important issue is mental health. Having served on the Detroit-Wayne County Community Mental Health Agency Board, I know firsthand there are professionals dedicated to helping the mentally ill live normal lives in society. Allocating the resources necessary to address and assist those afflicted with mental health issues early on would help prevent crimes, which would relieve our prison system and help those suffering with mental illness to become productive, tax-paying citizens. Instead of incarceration, let's strive for treatment.

### Representative Kevin M. Cotter (R-99, Mt. Pleasant)



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Bar Admit Date: November 29, 2006  
Law School: Thomas M. Cooley Law School

Standing Committees: Elections and Ethics  
(Majority Vice Chair); Insurance; Judiciary (Chair);  
Michigan Competitiveness; Tax Policy



**Representative Tim Greimel**  
**House Minority Leader**  
 (D-29, Auburn Hills)



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 Bar Admit Date: November 15, 2000  
 Law School: University of Michigan Law School  
 Standing Committee: Government Operations  
 Statutory Standing Committee: House Fiscal Agency Governing Committee

**Representative Kurt L. Heise**  
 (R-20, Plymouth Township)



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 Bar Admit Date: November 13, 1991  
 Law School: Wayne State University Law School  
 Standing Committees: Criminal Justice (Chair); Elections and Ethics; Judiciary; Transportation and Infrastructure

**How did your legal training and/or experience as a lawyer influence your choice to enter public service?**

I chose to enter public service before becoming a lawyer; the experience and training gained in the law helped me better understand the issues, policies, and history of our government and system of laws, and helped me become a better public servant to this day.

**Politicians and lawyers frequently suffer from a bad public image despite the many positive contributions both make to society. How do you think the public image of lawyers can be improved?**

I can't speak for or defend the entire profession, but attorneys in government, like those of us in the legislature, have an obligation in our official duties to provide good and sound counsel and careful deliberation to our colleagues and the general public.

**Is there a particular area of the law you hope to modify or change?**

This year, I will serve as chair of the House Committee on Criminal Justice. This will give me the opportunity to protect pub-

lic safety, monitor our new indigent defense program, and work on laws to prevent human trafficking in Michigan.

**Representative Andrew J. Kandrevas**  
 (D-13, Southgate)



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 Bar Admit Date: November 19, 2001  
 Law School: Wayne State University Law School  
 Standing Committee: Appropriations  
 Appropriations Subcommittees: Corrections (Minority Vice Chair); Fiscal Oversight (Minority Vice Chair); Higher Education; Human Services; Transportation (Minority Vice Chair)

**Rep. Klint Kesto**  
 (R-39, Commerce Township)



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 Bar Admit Date: November 14, 2006  
 Law School: Wayne State University Law School  
 Standing Committees: Criminal Justice; Families, Children, and Seniors; Health Policy; Judiciary (Majority Vice Chair); Regulatory Reform

**How did your legal training and/or experience as a lawyer influence your choice to enter public service?**

As a practicing prosecuting attorney, I found that legislation was not always updated, and although effective in theory, not always effective when applied practically. As an attorney, I found many things that needed closer scrutiny in terms of legislation, and that definitions needed to be clearer and certain outcomes needed to be anticipated and addressed with legislation. All these things steered me to become a part of the legislature. As a prosecutor, I was committed to public service. As a state legislator, I retained the ability and commitment to serve our families and our great state.

**Politicians and lawyers frequently suffer from a bad public image despite the many positive contributions both make to society. How do you think the public image of lawyers can be improved?**

Lawyers and politicians are lumped into the same category in terms of public image. However, only 18 of the 148 state legislators

in the 96th legislature were attorneys. I believe we can change the perception and image of politicians and lawyers by connecting with others in the community. Many politicians and lawyers come from the same walks of life as our neighbors and community members, and in order to change the perception, those individuals must be able to see the genuine side of our personalities and the positive contributions we are making to society.

### Is there a particular area of the law you hope to modify or change?

I would like to change many things in legislation, as all of us would. Moving forward, I believe the biggest issues are in health care, corrections and criminal justice, and economic development. The health care industry is very dynamic, and we need to adjust with technology and the times. We need to ensure that Michigan is the nation's leading provider in quality health care and our delivery system is efficient and effective. Our corrections budget is enormous and needs reform, and our corrections system is affected by our criminal justice legislation. We certainly need to create legislation that keeps our communities safe, yet integrates mental health assistance for those in need of such services. Finally, we need to keep Michigan families here in the state and retain the tremendous talent we have in our youth. Our greatest asset is our youth, and we must facilitate an environment in which jobs are being created, enabling our state to grow with vibrant families and communities.

### Representative Tom Leonard (R-93, Lansing)



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Bar Admit Date: December 14, 2007  
Law School: Michigan State University  
College of Law

Standing Committees: Commerce; Insurance (Majority Vice Chair); Judiciary; Michigan Competitiveness; Oversight

### How did your legal training and/or experience as a lawyer influence your choice to enter public service?

I have spent my entire legal career serving others, first as an assistant prosecuting attorney for Genesee County and later as an assistant attorney general. As a prosecutor, I was able to help victims daily. The fulfillment of making a positive difference in someone's life cannot be measured. I wanted to continue this service in the legislature.

### Politicians and lawyers frequently suffer from a bad public image despite the many positive contributions both make to society. How do you think the public image of lawyers can be improved?

As advocates, lawyers typically do a great job presenting their cases in court, but are terrible at communicating the many positive things they do for the public. The Genesee County Bar Association organizes an annual holiday dinner, where hundreds of lower-income families receive a hot meal and gifts for their children. The Attorney General's office not only takes part in several community service projects, but also advocates for crime victims' rights, consumers, and children. Our profession needs to do a better job communicating the many benefits we bring to the community.

### Is there a particular area of the law you hope to modify or change?

I want to be an advocate for crime victims, particularly our most vulnerable. During my time as a prosecutor, I worked with the Genesee County Elder Abuse Task Force on some of the most egregious elder abuse cases. Unfortunately, elder abuse is becoming a growing concern for our state.

### Representative Ellen Cogen Lipton (D-27, Huntington Woods)



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Bar Admit Date: November 13, 1992  
Law School: Harvard Law School

Standing Committees: Education (Minority Vice Chair); Insurance; Judiciary (Minority Vice Chair)

Statutory Standing Committee: Legislative Council (Minority Vice Chair)

### How did your legal training and/or experience as a lawyer influence your choice to enter public service?

Legal training is built on a foundation of critical inquiry and creative problem solving. These are skills on which I have consistently relied both when I practiced patent law and now when serving constituents.

### Politicians and lawyers frequently suffer from a bad public image despite the many positive contributions both make to society. How do you think the public image of lawyers can be improved?

As a lawyer, one of your most valuable assets is your reputation. The same is true for politicians. As such, it is incumbent upon all members of the profession to set high ethical standards for themselves and their colleagues.

### Is there a particular area of the law you hope to modify or change?

In my third term, I hope to focus on the area of indigent criminal defense. Our current system may be constitutionally inadequate. Therefore, I will continue to work with all the stakeholders in crafting legislation to address these problems.

#### Representative Stacy L. Erwin Oakes Michigan Legislative Black Caucus Vice Chair (D-95, Saginaw)



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Bar Admit Date: February 6, 2002  
Law School: Michigan State University  
College of Law

Standing Committees: Commerce; Criminal Justice  
(Minority Vice Chair); Financial Services

Statutory Standing Committee: Legislative Council

### How did your legal training and/or experience as a lawyer influence your choice to enter public service?

I've always believed "to whom much is given, much is required." I've been blessed in so many ways and have continually sought to touch the lives of children and families through public service and advocacy. Being the youngest girl of 13 children, my advocacy training started at an early age. Throughout my career I've looked for ways to help others and give back through service: as a teacher with Saginaw Public Schools, as a corrections officer at the Saginaw Correctional Facility, as an adjunct professor at Saginaw Valley State University, as an assistant attorney general, and in my current job representing the citizens of the 95th District. I obtained my law degree from the Michigan State University College of Law while working for the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. As a former assistant attorney general, I've prosecuted and defended cases throughout Michigan, many on behalf of the state. While my legal experience influenced my decision to pursue public office, I have strived to give back to the community through service.

### Politicians and lawyers frequently suffer from a bad public image despite the many positive contributions both make to society. How do you think the public image of lawyers can be improved?

It has long been my observation that the image of public officials and attorneys suffers greatly at the hands of a few offenders who continually violate the public's trust. In these instances, the indiscretions seem pervasive in the eyes of the public as reoccurring offenders continually abuse their influence. This reflects very poorly on our profession. As in every profession, there will

be those who violate the public trust; no profession is perfect in this regard.

I believe attorneys would be well served by a concerted and unified effort to better engage the public and generate greater awareness of the profound and positive impact we have on shaping and molding our communities, state, and nation every day. The story of the corrupt and self-serving offender is always well covered in the media; however, countless stories of attorneys and public officials working tirelessly on behalf of the public and providing pro bono services—actions that have a tremendous impact on the lives of Michigan families—go untold daily.

### Is there a particular area of the law you hope to modify or change?

I have many policy goals for this term. Foremost, I'm happy to say I achieved a 100 percent voting record during my first term in office. I will look to maintain my perfect voting record—understanding that sometimes life events will make that impossible—to make sure the voices of my constituents are always present and accounted for in the House chamber as we make decisions that impact the lives of children and their families.

I believe we need to start by having a sincere discussion about the state budget and how it reflects on our priorities. As business leaders have called on Michigan to invest in higher education, funding per student has declined 35 percent in the last decade while spending per inmate has increased 42 percent. We currently spend more on a prisoner in one year than we spend on the average four-year degree for a Michigan graduate. This is unacceptable. If we wish to revitalize Michigan's economy, we must invest in K-12 and higher education so we're able to educate the highly skilled workforce businesses will demand in the next decade.

Economists and business leaders currently estimate that 62 percent of jobs will require post-secondary education by 2018. If we fail to meet this challenge, the best-paying jobs will move away—or they will never locate here in the first place.

#### Representative Rose Mary C. Robinson (D-4, Detroit)



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Bar Admit Date: June 7, 1973  
Law School: Wayne State University Law School

Standing Committees: Criminal Justice; Financial  
Liability Reform; Oversight

Statutory Standing Committee: Legislative Council

### How did your legal training and/or experience as a lawyer influence your choice to enter public service?

I was a political activist before attending law school in 1967, but my experience as a criminal defense lawyer for the last 39

years influenced my decision to run for state representative in 2012 to reform the Michigan Department of Corrections and the criminal justice system.

### Politicians and lawyers frequently suffer from a bad public image despite the many positive contributions both make to society. How do you think the public image of lawyers can be improved?

In the era of Citizens United, the image of lawyer-legislators will improve when they take a strong stand against the excessive influence of special corporate interests. Legislators need to empower their constituents. Lawyer-legislators need to spend more time in our senior centers, schools, worksites, and neighborhoods and less time taking free meals at endless meet-and-greets with lobbyists who dominate Lansing.

### Is there a particular area of the law you hope to modify or change?

I have a primary interest in reforming the penal system. I also hope to modify campaign finance law and improve laws limiting lobbyists.

## Representative Rashida Tlaib (D-6, Detroit)



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Bar Admit Date: January 4, 2007  
Law School: Thomas M. Cooley Law School

Standing Committee: Appropriations  
(Minority Vice Chair)

Appropriations Subcommittees: Community Health (Minority Vice Chair); Human Services (Minority Vice Chair)

Statutory Standing Committee: House Fiscal Agency Governing Committee (Minority Vice Chair)

### How did your legal training and/or experience as a lawyer influence your choice to enter public service?

Beyond developing excellent critical thinking and analytical skills, lawyers and public servants enjoy working directly with people. As a state representative, I continue to help residents on a one-on-one level by providing direct services that address the everyday issues families face and, in turn, develop policies that address the cause of those issues. In addition, I am the only representative who operates a Neighborhood Service Center offering more than 10 anti-poverty programs for families and seniors.

### Politicians and lawyers frequently suffer from a bad public image despite the many positive contributions both make to society. How do you think the public image of lawyers can be improved?

The public needs to see legislators and lawyers actively involved in their communities. We need to return to "service politics" where the smallest to the biggest issues are resolved through strong advocacy. We need to personally connect with our residents and clients and not always rely on our staff. The creation of the Neighborhood Service Center has helped strengthen my relationship with my district and built a trusting partnership to improve our quality of life. Residents don't have to travel two hours to meet with me. I am in the neighborhood. I prepare tax returns for free and help families connect with weatherization programs and apply for aid to prevent home foreclosure. This type of work doesn't require legislation and approval by the Michigan legislature. If we take this approach, we will completely transform our image.

### Is there a particular area of the law you hope to modify or change?

One of the most critical challenges facing Michigan is aggressively combating poverty, which has increased across our state, and improving our education system.

A number of tax policies passed under the current administration have directly hurt working families, seniors, and children. As the tax season approaches, some of the most successful anti-poverty programs, like the Earned Income Tax Credit and Home Heating Credit, will be significantly reduced. Many of these tax policies were created to help prevent families from having to apply for public assistance.

Our state is facing a crisis in our education system. We have seen overcrowded classrooms, a drop in reading scores, districts facing bankruptcy, a decline in access to quality schools, and so much more. Inevitably, this will further reduce our population, increase the burden on our corrections system, and cause our unemployment rate to increase. The high school dropout rate in our corrections population is over 70 percent.

## Representative Robert J. VerHeulen (R-74, Walker)



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Bar Admit Date: May 11, 1978  
Law School: Wayne State University Law School

Standing Committee: Appropriations

Appropriations Subcommittees: Community Health (Majority Vice Chair); Higher Education; Judiciary (Majority Vice Chair); Transportation (Chair)





### How did your legal training and/or experience as a lawyer influence your choice to enter public service?

I view the practice of law in any capacity as a form of public service. Lawyers are critical thinkers trained to weigh and analyze complex situations and the application of relevant legal authority. Lawyers play a significant role in the administration of our justice system. They are problem solvers involved in virtually every aspect of our society. My experience as a lawyer has provided the tools necessary to be an effective advocate in the legislature as we seek public policies that will address the many issues confronting Michigan. This experience was very beneficial in the 11 years I served as mayor of Walker and I have no doubt it will serve me well in the legislature.

### Politicians and lawyers frequently suffer from a bad public image despite the many positive contributions both make to society. How do you think the public image of lawyers can be improved?

I believe that politicians and lawyers suffer from a bad public image due in part to the fact that both deal with the problems of others. Interaction with a lawyer may involve an injury, a business conflict, a domestic dispute, or some other problem. Even when the result is favorable, the client may resent having to pay an attorney to secure what the client felt entitled to in the first place. In addition, many do not understand the role of an attorney vigorously defending a client who may already have been prejudged as guilty.

The public image of lawyers can be improved by educating the public with respect to lawyers' role in the administration of justice and order in our society. We should also publicize the role played by lawyers in areas like pro bono programs, service on nonprofit boards and local school boards and in city and township government, and a host of other volunteer efforts that enhance our communities. While there is no simple solution to this public-image problem, it is important that we continue to educate the general public regarding the contributions made by lawyers.

### Is there a particular area of the law you hope to modify or change?

I do not have a particular area of law that I hope to modify or change. I hope to focus on transportation, health care, and our corrections system.

### Representative John J. Walsh, Speaker Pro Tempore (R-19, Livonia)



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Bar Admit Date: November 25, 1987  
Law School: Wayne State University Law School

Standing Committee: Appropriations

Appropriations Subcommittees: Higher Education (Majority Vice Chair); Judiciary (Chair)

Statutory Standing Committee: Legislative Council (Majority Vice Chair)

### How did your legal training and/or experience as a lawyer influence your choice to enter public service?

As laws reflect the rules by which citizens agree to live, a thorough understanding of our legal history, the manner in which laws are created, and how the same are applied made me think we could do better with a more thoughtful and focused legal system.

### Politicians and lawyers frequently suffer from a bad public image despite the many positive contributions both make to society. How do you think the public image of lawyers can be improved?

While it may sound a bit trite, lawyers should accentuate the positive and downplay the negative. Greater civility between lawyers in the public eye, touting the many good services provided by lawyers, and promoting our collective community involvement would be a start.

### Is there a particular area of the law you hope to modify or change?

It is my intent to focus on how the state funds our courts and the indigent defense system. The patchwork of local, county, and state funding that has arisen over the years has caused greater frustration for practitioners and disparate legal services throughout the state at every level.