

2026 Michael Franck Award Nomination - James L. Liggins, Jr.

From: [State Bar of Michigan](#)
To: [Carrie Sharlow](#)
Subject: Franck Award
Date: Thursday, March 12, 2026 4:26:38 PM

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| Name of Nominee: * | James L. Liggins, Jr. |
| Title: | Senior Counsel |
| Firm or Organization: | Warner Norcross + Judd LLP |
| Address: | 180 E. Water Street, Suite 7000, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007-3876 |
| Phone: | (269) 276-8146 |
| Email: | jliggins@wnj.com |
| Name of Nominator: * | Mark A. Holsomback |
| Title: | Magistrate |
| Firm or Organization: | 8th District Court |
| Address: | 330 Eleanor Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007 |
| Phone: | (269) 383-6426 |
| Email: * | mark.holsomback@kalcourt.gov |

Explain the merits of your nomination, submit any supporting materials for your nominee by email, fax, or mail. Give specific examples.

Please see attached Nomination Letter.

The three members of the Representative Assembly 9th Circuit- Gail M. Towne, Donald L.R. Roberts, and Mark A. Holsomback nominate James L. Liggins, Jr for the Michael Franck Award.

James L. Liggins Jr. exemplifies the values of the Michael Franck Award through his sustained commitment to ethical practice, public service, and community leadership. His contributions include co-chairing the State Bar of Michigan Judicial Qualifications Committee, where he demonstrated steady, thoughtful leadership in evaluating candidates for judicial appointments. He successfully coordinated the National High School Mock Trial Competition in Kalamazoo during the height of the pandemic, ensuring a safe and effective national event under unprecedented circumstances.

Mr. Liggins also played a foundational role in strengthening access to justice in Kalamazoo County as a founding member of both the Charles A. Pratt Bar Association—the county’s first minority bar association—and Kalamazoo Defender Inc., its innovative nonprofit public defender office. His extensive board and community service further reflect his deep commitment to connecting the legal profession with the communities it serves.

Collectively, his record shows a consistent dedication to integrity, equity, and public-focused leadership, making him a compelling and highly deserving nominee for the Michael Franck Award.

Please see attached Resume.

Highlights of Resume:

Michigan State University College of Law, JD 2003
University of Michigan, BA, Political Science, 1998

Admitted to Practice in Michigan April 28, 2004.

Warner Norcross + Judd LLP, Senior Counsel 2018–Present
Miller Canfield, Principal, 2008–2018

Service to Bar:

SBM Commissioner, District F (September 2024–Present)
SBM Judicial Qualifications Committee–Member/Co–Chair, (August 2017–Present)

Service to the State/Community:

State of Michigan Board of Ethics–Member (2022–Present)
Harold and Grace Upjohn Foundation–Board of Directors (2016–Present)
Bronson Healthcare Group–Board of Directors; Vice–Chair/Chair (2016–Present)
Southwest Michigan First–Board of Directors (2019–Present)
Greenleaf Trust–Trustee, Secretary, Audit Committee (2023–Present)
Western Michigan University– Board of Trustees (2024–Present)

Awards:

Notable Black Leaders Award–Crain's Grand Rapids Business (2024)
Next Generation Leaders Fellowship–American Hospital Association (2024)
Super Lawyers–Thomson Reuters (2023)
Excellence in Governance Fellowship–Michigan Health & Hospital Association (2022)
George N. Bashara Jr. Distinguished Alumni Award–Michigan State University College of Law Alumni Association (2021)

Optional: List news, magazine, radio, and TV features about the nominee's accomplishments (do not submit actual articles or DVDs). Feel free to include any hyperlinks to these stories, if they are still online.

State date/page and media e.g.
12/12/07, p. 12, Lansing State Journal, "Lawyer Begins TLC Program in Schools"

Some media about awards and ICLE Contributor Link:

<https://www.wnj.com/updates/warner-attorney-james-l-liggins-jr-selected-one-of-notable-black-leaders-by-crains-grand-rapids-business/>
<https://www.wnj.com/updates/warners-james-l-liggins-jr-awarded-msu-college-of-laws-george-n-bashara-jr-distinguished-alumni-award/>
<https://ciskalamazoo.org/17th-annual-champs-celebration/>

ICLE Contributor Link:
<https://www.icle.org/modules/About/bio.aspx?&Pnumber=P66816>

March 12, 2026

Representative Assembly Nominating and Awards Committee
State Bar of Michigan

Re: Nomination of James L. Liggins Jr. for the Michael Franck Award

Dear Members of the Nominating and Awards Committee,

I am honored to nominate James L. Liggins Jr. for the **Michael Franck Award** in recognition of his exceptional dedication to public service, civic leadership, and the advancement of the legal profession. Throughout his career, Mr. Liggins has exemplified the ideals embodied by the **Michael Franck Award** through his unwavering commitment to service, integrity, and community engagement.

Mr. Liggins has consistently used his legal expertise and leadership skills to support and strengthen a wide range of civic and community organizations, as well as the State Bar of Michigan. His service on numerous boards and committees reflects a deep personal commitment to helping others and to fostering a meaningful relationship between the legal profession and the communities it serves.

I had the pleasure of working closely with Mr. Liggins as a member of the *State Bar of Michigan Judicial Qualifications Committee*, which he co-chaired. In that role, I saw firsthand his steady and thoughtful leadership in helping shape the State Judiciary by carefully vetting candidates for appointment to judicial vacancies. Likewise, I witnessed the remarkable success of the National High School Mock Trial Competition that Mr. Liggins coordinated in Kalamazoo during the height of a global pandemic.

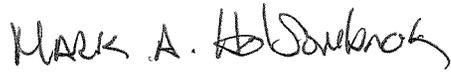
Mr. Liggins is also a founding member of two entities that have left an indelible mark on the administration of justice in Kalamazoo County: the *Charles A. Pratt Bar Association*, the first minority bar association in the county, and *Kalamazoo Defender*, the county's innovative nonprofit public defender office. Both organizations continue to strengthen representation, equity, and access to justice.

Mr. Liggins embodies the professional values long championed by Michael Franck. His career reflects a consistent dedication to ethical practice, civic responsibility, and the advancement of justice. He is widely respected not only for his accomplishments as an attorney, but for his character, leadership, and commitment to the service of others.

For these reasons, I strongly and wholeheartedly support the nomination of James L. Liggins Jr. for the **Michael Franck Award**.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me if any additional information would be helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark A. Holsomback". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "M".

Mark A. Holsomback P54713
8th District Court Magistrate
330 Eleanor Street
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007
mark.holsomback@kalcounty.gov
(269) 383-6426

JAMES L. LIGGINS JR. P66816

Warner Norcross+ Judd LLP
180 E. Water Street, Suite 7000
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007-3876

Senior Counsel • Experienced Litigator • Community & Civic Leader

EDUCATION

- Michigan State University College of Law, J.D., 2003
- University of Michigan, B.A., Political Science, 1998

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Warner Norcross + Judd LLP — Senior Counsel (2018–Present)

Litigator with broad experience in commercial, construction, personal injury, premises liability, real estate, and municipal matters. Advises businesses and municipalities on statutes, ordinances, codes, and property disputes. Former in-house counsel for a major utility. Founder and past president of *the Judge Charles A. Pratt Bar Association*.

Miller Canfield — Principal (2008–2018)

Handled complex litigation and advised corporate and municipal clients on legal and regulatory matters. Maintained significant community leadership roles with *United Way*, *Kalamazoo County Bar Association*, *Douglass Community Association*, and *the Greg Jennings Foundation*.

LEADERSHIP & PUBLIC SERVICE

- Commissioner, State Bar of Michigan (District F), 2024–Present
- Member/Co-Chair, State Bar of Michigan Judicial Qualifications Committee, 2017–Present
- Member, State of Michigan Board of Ethics, 2022–Present

BOARD & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- *Harold and Grace Upjohn Foundation* — Board of Directors (2016–Present)
- *Bronson Healthcare Group* — Board of Directors; Vice-Chair/Chair (2016–Present)
- *Southwest Michigan First* — Board of Directors (2019–Present)
- *Greenleaf Trust* — Trustee; Secretary, Audit Committee (2023–Present)
- *Western Michigan University* — Board of Trustees; (2024–Present)

LEGAL ASSOCIATIONS

American Bar Association • National Bar Association • Illinois State Bar • Indiana Bar Association • Kalamazoo County Bar Association • West Michigan Chapter, Federal Bar Association • Founder & Past President, Judge Charles A. Pratt Bar Association

HONORS & RECOGNITION

- Notable Black Leaders Award — Crain's Grand Rapids Business (2024)
- Next Generation Leaders Fellowship — American Hospital Association (2024)
- Super Lawyers — Thomson Reuters (2023)
- Excellence in Governance Fellowship — Michigan Health & Hospital Association (2022)
- George N. Bashara, Jr. Distinguished Alumni Award — MSU College of Law (2021)