

Michigan State Courts: Resources on the Internet

Often underutilized, Michigan appellate and trial courts offer a wide range of research tools on the Internet. Below are descriptions of common and not so common resources.

Michigan Supreme Court

Court Rules

The Michigan Supreme Court resource page at <http://courts.michigan.gov/supremecourt/#> includes links to current, proposed, and recently adopted court rules. Deadlines for comments are provided for each proposed court rule amendment. You can also view submitted comments and find the location, dates, and times of scheduled public administrative hearings. Instructions are provided for submitting comments or reserving time to speak at an administrative hearing.

Administrative Orders

The Court has links to proposed, recently adopted, and current administrative orders at <http://courts.michigan.gov/supremecourt/Resources/Administrative/index.htm#administrative>.

Model Civil Jury Instructions

A free electronic copy is available at <http://www.courts.michigan.gov/mcji-index.htm>.

Opinions and Orders via the Case Inquiry System

In a collaborative effort between the Supreme Court and the court of appeals, links are now available to PDF versions of orders and opinions released by both courts. The Case Information System allows you to retrieve information on appellate cases that are available for public viewing. All information provided is a matter of public record. The system is updated nightly and provides case information and current status for cases filed

from the mid-1980s to the present. Case information includes links to unpublished court of appeals opinions issued since July 1996; Supreme Court opinions and published court of appeals opinions issued since January 2001; court of appeals orders issued after January 1, 2005; and Supreme Court orders issued after September 21, 2005. You can also subscribe to a listserv that sends e-mail alerts when Supreme Court orders are released and provides links to those orders.

Michigan Courts Self-Help Center

Designed for the self-represented litigant, the self-help center at <http://courts.michigan.gov/scao/selfhelp/selfhelphome.htm> provides basic tools and information for practitioners, such as links to Michigan libraries, statutes, court rules, and court forms. The Supreme Court Self-Help Center at <http://courts.michigan.gov/scao/selfhelp/intro/legalinfo.htm#library> includes links to the State Constitution, Michigan Administrative Code, Michigan Attorney General opinions, and Michigan Appellate Digest. Federal information is also provided, with links to the U.S. Constitution, U.S. Code, U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, and the federal government portal (<http://www.firstgov.gov/>). New attorneys or practitioners litigating a case outside their practice area may find the brief descriptions of appellate, civil, criminal, family, and probate proceedings useful. The descriptions may be found under the Topics tab.

Local Trial Court Links

At <http://courts.michigan.gov/scao/services/dirs/tlinks.htm>, the Supreme Court provides links to the websites of some of Michigan's local trial courts—district, circuit, friend of court offices, probate, and trial (a combination of circuit, probate, and district courts under one link). The Court further designates whether the local court offers on-

line access to records, accepts online payment for certain civil infractions, provides a limited online docket, accepts filings online, or accepts filings by facsimile. Also included is a link to Courts.Net, which links to trial courts in other states.

Michigan Court of Appeals

The Michigan Court of Appeals Legal Links web page at <http://courtofappeals.mijud.net/resources/links.htm> includes links to Michigan judicial, legislative, and executive materials, as well as federal resources, general legal websites, and law-related organizations, publications, and news services. Below are descriptions of the more common resources.

Opinions

You can search Michigan Supreme Court opinions through links to the Institute of Continuing Legal Education (ICLE) (October 1995 to present) and the State Bar of Michigan (January 1998 to present). You'll also find links to administrative orders from ICLE, ethics opinions from the State Bar (October 1988 to present), and court of appeals opinions from ICLE (August 1996 to present) and the State Bar (August 1997 to present). You can search directly for Supreme Court opinions and published court of appeals opinions issued since January 2001 at the court of appeals website at <http://courtofappeals.mijud.net/resources/opinions.htm>. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals opinions are available via links to the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals (July 1, 1999–present) and Emory Law School (January 1995 to June 1999). United States Supreme Court opinions are available via links to the U.S. Supreme Court's official website, Cornell Law School's Legal Information Institute (LII) (May 1990 to present), and USSCPlus.com (some fee-based).

Court Rules

Links are provided to current, recently adopted (May 1995 to present), and proposed Michigan court rules through ICLE. Electronic copies of the rules are also available at <http://courtofappeals.mijud.net/court/courtrules.htm>. The court of appeals also provides a link to the Federal Rules of Evidence through the LII.

Legal Research

The court of appeals Legal Links web page also includes links to Michigan Compiled Laws; the Michigan Constitution; Michigan Manual; Code of Federal Regulations; All Law; Internet Legal Gateway; Hieros Gamos; The Comprehensive Law and Governmental Portal; FindLaw; FindLaw's Legal Dictionary; Yahoo Law; Washlaw Web; Westlaw Online; ICLE; LII; Avalon Project at Yale Law School: Historical Documents (view digital documents relevant to the fields of law, history, economics, politics, diplomacy, and government); University of Michigan Law Library; Michigan Electronic Library (MeL); Nolo Press Self-Help Law Center; LawGuru.com; Lawyers.com (Martindale-Hubbell); 'Lectric Law Library; LawsOnline; and THOMAS: Legislative Information on the Internet.

Writing

You can view the legal citation rules via Cornell Law School (Bluebook and ALWD Citation Manual); find the perfect word with Merriam-Webster Thesaurus, ARTFL Project: Roget's Thesaurus, or WordNet; look up medical definitions with The On-line Medical Dictionary; and search mental health information with Mental Health Net.

Local Courts: District, Circuit, and Probate

Outlining the Internet information available for each of Michigan's trial courts exceeds the scope of this article; however, a sampling of unique tools available from specific courts is outlined below.

Wayne County Probate Court

<http://wpcpc.us/>

Resources available include links to Ancestry (Social Security Death Index); Autoweb (finds the value of used vehicles); Babelfish

Language Translator; BigCharts (stock market information, including current and past stock prices); City of Detroit (tax records, legal descriptions, and SEVs); Homegain (real estate valuation); State of Michigan Corporate Records (and commercial licenses); and Whatis (technical term lookup).

43rd District Court

<http://www.ferndalecourt.com/>

Looking for attorney jokes? Go to this court's Lighter Side web page at <http://www.ferndalecourt.com/lighter.htm>.

61st District Court

<http://www.ci.grand-rapids.mi.us/197>

This court's Legal Resources page includes links to organizations, Michigan courts, Michigan Law Online, local government, West Michigan law firms, Michigan laws, and Legal Ethics.com.

6th Circuit Court

<http://www.oakgov.com/circuit>

See the Hints for Attorneys web page at http://www.oakgov.com/circuit/hints_attorneys/, which outlines general information for conducting business in the Sixth Circuit Court. The court also provides links pertaining to Native American legal affairs.

37th Circuit Court

<http://courts.co.calhoun.mi.us/>

The main page includes links to the Calhoun County Judicial Council, administrative orders and uniform holidays, policies and trial court fees (uniform policies and procedures for all trial courts), and local court rules. The site also maintains an Internet Court Library with links to pamphlets and booklets prepared by the State Court Administrative Office, the State Bar, and other organizations.

Washtenaw County Trial Court

<http://courts.ewashtenaw.org/>

This site was selected as one of the top 10 probate court websites nationally in 2003 and selected as one of the top four websites in the world at the 6th Court Technology Conference in September 1999. Links are provided to electronic filing of pleadings, the *Landlord-Tenant Benchbook*, and fee schedules for traffic violations. Links to the court docket allow visitors to view the court docket

for the next two weeks. The site offers a self-help section, a collection of links to Internet resources related to other courts, law firms, law-related subjects, the county, the City of Ann Arbor, and the state.

7th Circuit Court

<http://www.co.geneseee.mi.us/circuitcourt/index.htm>

This court's main page includes links to local, state, and federal government information. Links are also provided to local administrative orders and court rules. The site also offers a searchable database for county and district court dockets.

Conclusion

The information provided represents a fraction of the Internet resources provided by Michigan courts. The investigation of court resources benefits not only practitioners, but also judges and court staff. Prepared practitioners assist judges and court staff in the efficient management and disposition of cases. ♦



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