

UpFront

By Naseem Stecker and Samantha Meinke

Finding Solutions to the Indigent Defense Crisis



A diverse panel of national and state experts gathered on the campus of Wayne State University in downtown Detroit on December 14 to examine failures within Michigan's public defense system and to look for solutions that will ensure justice for everyone. Left to right: Hon. Dennis Archer, U.S. Rep. John Conyers, Jr., Chief Justice Marilyn Kelly, Jo-Ann Wallace, Prof. Robert Sedler, Dean Robert Ackerman, and Robin Dahlberg. Back row: State Rep. Bob Constan, Norm Leifstein, Barry Scheck, Anthony Chambers, Dawn Van Hoek, Hon. Cynthia Diane Stephens, and Hon. Fred Borchard. ■



SBM photos

The U.S. House Judiciary Committee, chaired by Congressman John Conyers, held a briefing in the morning. A panel discussion covered issues such as the importance of standards in fixing local and national crises, attorney performance and oversight, state funding and supplemental federal money, state court litigation, and easing access to federal courts. During the afternoon session, Representative Mark Meadows convened a hearing of the Michigan House Judiciary Committee to take testimony on HB 5676, a bill to create the Michigan Public Defense Act. ■

First Father-Daughter Duo Serving on SBM Board of Commissioners



The State Bar of Michigan's Board of Commissioners currently has its first set of father-daughter commissioners. Donald E. McGinnis, Jr., commissioner for District I, and his daughter, Maureen M. McGinnis, Young Lawyers Section chair-elect, both represent Oakland County on the board and practice law at the firm Mr. McGinnis founded in 1973 in Troy. He will finish his three-year

term as a commissioner in 2010, and practices trial litigation involving criminal cases and family law matters. Ms. McGinnis has served as district representative for Oakland County on the SBM Young Lawyers Section Council since 2004. She joined her father's firm in 2003 and practices criminal defense and family law. ■

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Wilson and Deegan Recognized



Courtesy photo

Patrick J. Wilson

The Grand Traverse-Leelanau-Antrim Bar Association recently presented Patrick J. Wilson of Smith, Haughey, Rice and Roegge with its 2009 Madeleine Thomas Award at its fall dinner meeting. This award, named after a Traverse City attorney who was instrumental in the formation of the Women's Resource Center, is given each year to a bar association member for service to the community. Wilson was honored for his volunteer work with a number of local organizations. The bar group also recognized Joseph E. Deegan, a former Leelanau County Probate Court judge. A special proclamation was presented to his son, Jack Deegan. ■

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The news, people, and events featured on this page attract notice. If you'd like to share news of an interesting event or law-related news, send us a few lines (not to exceed 150 words) and include a photograph or high-quality digital image. We reserve the right to edit all submissions for clarity, and the right to decline to publish. Please submit your news to:

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Michigan Legal Milestone Plaque on Poletown and Eminent Domain Placed



SBM photos

Left to right: Michigan Legal Milestone Subcommittee Chair Michael Ellis, Law-Related Education and Public Outreach Committee Chair Jeffrey Paulsen, and Hon. Paul Paruk, chief judge of the 31st District Court in Hamtramck, stand with the recently placed milestone plaque. The marker is in Zuss-

man Park, outside the Hamtramck City Hall, which houses the 33rd District Court. The plaque commemorates the 1981 *Poletown Neighborhood Council v Detroit*, when, in an effort to bolster Detroit's crumbling economic base, a working-class neighborhood known as Poletown was demolished to make way for a new General Motors plant. This action was challenged by homeowners and small businesses in the area, but was rebuffed by the Michigan Supreme Court in a landmark 1981 decision. The ruling had national ramifications and set a new standard by expanding the definition of public use to include economic development. In 2004, the Court reversed itself (*County of Wayne v Hathcock*).



For more information about the Michigan Legal Milestones program, which highlights significant cases and personalities in our history, or to read about all 34 Michigan Legal Milestones, visit http://www.michbar.org/programs/milestone/milestones_home.cfm. ■

A "Straker" Thank You



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Solon Phillips (center), president of the D. Augustus Straker Bar Association, hosted a special reception November 20 in Southfield to thank corporate, community, law firm, and law school partners who support the mission of the organization. Formed in 1990, the Straker Bar promotes legal practice opportunities for minorities and women

and facilitates equal justice for all Michigan citizens. The special-purpose organization is named after David Augustus Straker, a pioneering African-American attorney, author, and jurist. For more information about the bar and its various programs, visit www.strakerlaw.org. ■

Committee Offers "Dealing with the Media" Seminars

When the media calls, do you know how to respond appropriately? The State Bar Law and the Media Committee is offering attorneys an opportunity to learn how to deal with the press in a practical, solution-oriented way. The hour-long seminars are free and are moderated by attorneys with journalistic experience. Topics Include:

- What do "off the record" and "on background" mean?
- When should I return a reporter's phone calls?
- What may happen if I don't talk to the press?
- What makes a lawsuit or legal dispute "newsworthy"?
- What do the Rules of Professional Conduct permit me to say?

For more information or to schedule a seminar, contact Cameron Evans, chairperson, Law and the Media Committee, at (313) 465-7370 or cevans@honigman.com. ■