

Victoria Ann Radke, 2010–2011 Chair of the Representative Assembly

By Victoria Ann Radke

Usually a spouse, sibling, or long-time friend introduces the incoming chair of the Representative Assembly. I have decided to break with tradition and introduce myself.

Most of the Representative Assembly knows me through my work as a member of this final policymaking body of the State Bar of Michigan. Since 2001, I have worked with the other 149 members to give back to our profession through endeavoring to shape new legislation and court rules. Giving back to my profession and my community has been an important part of my legal career.

I grew up in Redford Township, a suburb of Detroit, and attended parochial schools for 10 years before graduating from Lee M. Thurston High School in 1968. Then it was on to Eastern Michigan University, where I earned my bachelor's degree in theatre (my avocation). I took an indirect route to my law degree, working as a legal secretary and paralegal before a strong kick in the pants from my best friend sent me to law school. So I moved on, enrolling at the Detroit College of Law (now Michigan State University College of Law). At DCL, I earned a place on *Law Review*, had my case note published, and became a note and comment editor.

After graduating law school in 1987 and working briefly for the City of Detroit, I accepted a position as staff attorney for the Delta County Friend of the Court. Having been a city kid my whole life, I found myself in the Upper Peninsula. Striving to overcome the culture shock, I joined a local community theatre group where I have been not only an actor, but a costumer, set decorator, prop mistress, stage manager, and makeup director. I also became active in the Delta County Bar Association, serving two terms as president, which led to committee work for the State Bar and a seat on the Representative Assembly.



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After 15 years at the Friend of the Court, I opened my own practice and for the last five years have concentrated on family law, mediation, and criminal defense.

Throughout my life, my family has been a great inspiration to me and taught me the value of giving back to the community. My parents volunteered at our schools, coached sports teams, and were scout leaders, helping to mold many people who remain my friends to this day. My older brother, Vince

(who now works for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), was a Peace Corps volunteer and World Health Organization worker who was part of the smallpox eradication program that has successfully controlled the spread of smallpox worldwide. My sister, Deb, and her husband have, among other projects, adopted a local grade school in their community, providing school supplies, tutoring, and ice cream socials. They have also adopted American service-women overseas, supplying them with regular care packages. My younger brother, Mark, regularly volunteers his automotive skills to assist his neighbors, friends, and family.

As for me, I coached a high school mock trial team in Escanaba for seven years and have been an active Law Day participant in addition to volunteering in my community. Now I am dedicating my free time for the next year to the State Bar.

In 1992, I was elected to my first term as a member of the Representative Assembly from Delta County. As my tenure continued, I increased my time commitment to service to the State Bar through committee work. I have thoroughly enjoyed my work with the Assembly and the Board of Commissioners. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve my fellow lawyers, and I encourage others to get involved in the Bar on both the local and state levels as a way to meet colleagues and improve the legal community.

I am very proud to be a lawyer and work with other lawyers who also believe in and love the role we have in society—to help our clients, our communities, and the legal system for the public good. It is an honor to bring my experience to the Representative Assembly and its function as a vital voice benefiting lawyers throughout the state. I look forward to this year of service to the Representative Assembly and the State Bar of Michigan. ■