

Michigan's Lawyer-Legislators of the 96th State Legislature

It is with pleasure that we continue a tradition of presenting the lawyer-legislators at the start of each legislative term. For the 2011–2012 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 question; 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 can lawyers help to revitalize Michigan?

Fifty years ago in his presidential inaugural address, John F. Kennedy challenged the nation when he said, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." Today, it is no secret Michigan is undergoing some difficult times. I'm a firm believer that out of challenges also come opportunities, and that Michigan, like our great nation, will see better times ahead. As a proud member of the Michigan legislature, I've always believed that our people are our greatest resource, and that the leadership, character, creativity, and perseverance of our citizens will propel our state into better times. Members of the State Bar have much to offer in experience, talent, and wisdom. From the variety of experiences and observations gained through legal practice and the ability to effectuate and communicate positive change, members of the State Bar have a unique opportunity to help shape public policy and public discourse for a better Michigan.

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 (Vice Chair); Judiciary; Regulatory Reform (Chair)

Statutory Standing Committee: Legislative Council



How can lawyers help to revitalize Michigan?

There is no single solution to Michigan's economic problems. Our state's economy will only be revitalized with the input of a variety of its citizens working toward the same goal. While entrepreneurship is not the first thing that comes to the mind of many when they think of members of our profession, attorneys are among the most entrepreneurial people in Michigan. I have been tremendously impressed with the courage displayed by my colleagues who have taken the risks involved in starting their own practices.

Moreover, it is often these same small-firm and solo practitioners who assist those in need in our troubled economy. Access to justice should not be limited to those with economic means, and attorneys play a great role in ensuring that Michigan citizens who are unemployed or underemployed have access to the legal system.

Senator Tonya Schuitmaker (R-20, Lawton)

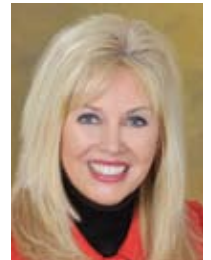
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Bar Admit Date: November 8, 1993
Law School: Detroit College of Law

Standing Committees: Appropriations; Energy and Technology; Health Policy; Judiciary (Vice Chair)

Statutory Standing Committee: Legislative Council

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



How can lawyers help to revitalize Michigan?

In law school, lawyers learn to think both critically and analytically, enabling them to solve myriad problems. These problems transcend to the state level, which is how lawyers can help revitalize Michigan. As a Michigan state senator, I am in an active position to develop laws and ideas to move the region forward.

Senator Gretchen Whitmer, Senate Democratic Leader (D-23, Lansing)

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

Standing Committee: Government Operations (Minority Vice Chair)

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



How can lawyers help to revitalize Michigan?

Lawyers are uniquely positioned to not only help the men and women of Michigan, but the state as a whole. Whether it is through economic development, fighting for individual rights, or government accountability, lawyers are important to the everyday lives of Michigan citizens. Legal training better equips practical and legal analysis for the advancement of our state. In my own professional career, I have fought to create new investments in Michigan, ensure our children get the education they need to compete for the jobs of tomorrow, and preserve our quality of life. With the same vigor that drew me to law and public policy in the first place, I believe that lawyers need to fight every day to make

sure the intrinsic rights of every citizen are properly upheld while deploying economic development mechanisms to encourage and foster a new economy in Michigan, thereby transforming our state and government into the twenty-first century.

Representative Lisa Brown (D-39, West Bloomfield)

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Bar Admit Date: May 12, 1993
Law School: Detroit College of Law

Standing Committees: Education (Minority Vice Chair); Judiciary; Oversight, Reform, and Ethics



How can lawyers help to revitalize Michigan?

A properly functioning legal system is crucial to the success of any state. Lawyers will continue to play an important role in our judicial system, government, and community by defending the principles that allow our state and nation to thrive. Attorneys will continue to fight to protect people's rights by bringing attention to injustices like drug-industry immunity because the people of Michigan must come first. As we work to rebuild our state with new industries such as alternative energy and advanced batteries, lawyers will be there to help businesses, residents, and government navigate key issues, which will be crucial to creating jobs and revitalizing our state.

Representative Philip M. Cavanagh (D-17, Redford)

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

Standing Committees: Energy and Technology; Judiciary; Tax Policy



How can lawyers help to revitalize Michigan?

Michigan families demand a more effective government capable of addressing the serious challenges facing the state. During this pivotal time, we must work together as elected officials to make the difficult decisions necessary to transform Michigan. Lawyers have the training to manage complex issues and the ability to understand opposing opinions in every argument. These skills are highly advantageous as we attempt to end partisan gridlock and work on behalf of the Michigan residents we represent. From improving efficiency in the public sector to changing our outdated tax system and investing in key budget priorities, we cannot afford to wait any longer for a better Michigan. We will once again become a model for the nation if we take on the common-sense reforms that are clearly needed to move our state forward.

Representative Bob Constan (D-16, Dearborn Heights)

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Bar Admit Date: May 18, 1987
Law School: University of Detroit Mercy School of Law

Standing Committees: Judiciary; Local, Intergovernmental, and Regional Affairs; Tax Policy (Minority Vice Chair)

Statutory Standing Committee: Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (Minority Vice Chair)



How can lawyers help to revitalize Michigan?

Lawyers help the business community and working families deal with the problems they face in today's economy. A practicing attorney interacts with a wide array of people and industries—everything from manufacturing to entertainment to health care. Lawyers serving in the legislature are uniquely qualified to draft laws and enact good public policy that will help Michigan deal with the current economic downturn. State government must work to help diversify Michigan's economy and bring new industries and jobs to Michigan. Michigan's current governor and the past three governors have been lawyers. Two of the past four governors have served in the legislature. Lawyers are the best problem solvers and can lead the effort to revitalize Michigan.

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 Committee: Appropriations

Appropriations Subcommittees: Community Colleges; Higher Education (Vice Chair); Judiciary (Chair); Supplementals (Vice Chair)



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: Education; Families, Children, and Seniors; Judiciary (Vice Chair)



How can lawyers help to revitalize Michigan?

Lawyers can provide valuable counsel to entrepreneurs and risk-takers—the people who grow the economy. Our charge is to guide the job creators through the legal environment, empowering them to pursue their goals and realize their visions. When risk-takers succeed, our economy expands, jobs are created, and society benefits—including those in the legal profession. We must be an asset and not a hindrance to reinventing Michigan.

Representative Andrew James Kandreas (D-13, Southgate)

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Bar Admit Date: November 19, 2001
Law School: Wayne State University Law School

Standing Committees: Government Operations; Insurance (Minority Vice Chair); Tax Policy



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

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

Standing Committee: Appropriations
Statutory Standing Committee: Legislative Council

Appropriations Subcommittees: Community Colleges; General Government; School Aid (Minority Vice Chair)



How can lawyers help to revitalize Michigan?

Lawyers can help to revitalize our great state in a number of ways. Before serving in the legislature, I practiced intellectual property law, primarily focusing on university-based startup ven-

tures. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau teaches us that all net job increases occur among startups. In short, startups are the real jobs machine. As such, we know that the key to economic diversification and job creation in this state is nurturing and supporting startups, and attorneys are vital to this process. Attorneys advise and counsel entrepreneurs who are contemplating a startup venture, establish and protect the startup's real and intellectual property portfolio, and help secure funding for the startup venture. One of the things of which I am most proud in my first term was my sponsorship of the Angel Investor Business Development Act, which was signed into law at the end of 2010. This legislation will foster our growing climate of entrepreneurship by aggregating domestic venture capital dollars to Michigan startups, allowing them to take root and grow in our state.

Representative Mark S. Meadows (D-69, East Lansing)

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Bar Admit Date: October 24, 1974
Law School: Detroit College of Law

Standing Committees: Judiciary (Minority Vice Chair); Tax Policy
Statutory Standing Committee: Legislative Council



How can lawyers help to revitalize Michigan?

There are demands for many areas of expertise in the creation, passage, and review of legislation. Lawyers bring a particular perspective to the legislative process because of broad-based training and background. Lawyers are used to relying on the expertise of others in relation to technical areas. Lawyers must have strong written and verbal language skills. Lawyers are used to compromise. Lawyers are trained to analyze complicated legal issues. Lawyers are “big-picture” people. These skills are useful in every subject matter area of legislative work and are absolutely essential in developing an effective plan to restore Michigan to its status as the *Great Lakes State*.

Lawyers Making Law—Did You Know:

- Of the 48 people who have served as governor of Michigan, 28 have been attorneys—including each of the first 13 governors from 1835 to 1865. Taking into account that 26 of the nation's 44 presidents have been attorneys, that means attorneys have held the highest position in the state and nation approximately 59 percent of the time!
- The Declaration of Independence was signed by 56 people, 25 of whom were attorneys. Thirty-one of the 55 delegates to the United States Constitutional Convention of 1787 were attorneys.
- In the 110th United States Congress, 215 of the 435 members were attorneys. In the 111th Congress, 225 members were attorneys, which is nearly 52 percent. The average number of lawyer-legislators serving in the Michigan legislature since 1971 is approximately 20, or 14 percent. Nine of Michigan's 17-member congressional delegation are attorneys:

– Sen. Carl Levin	– Rep. Hansen Clarke (13th District)	– Rep. Sander M. Levin (12th District)
– Rep. Justin Amash (3rd District)	– Rep. John Conyers Jr. (14th District)	– Rep. Thaddeus G. McCotter (11th District)
– Rep. David L. Camp (4th District)	– Rep. John D. Dingell Jr. (15th District)	– Rep. Gary C. Peters (9th District)

Representative Chuck Moss (R-40, Birmingham)

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Bar Admit Date: November 14, 1979
Law School: University of Detroit Mercy School of Law

Standing Committee: Appropriations (Chair)

Statutory Standing Committees: House Fiscal Agency Governing Committee (Chair); Legislative Council

Appropriations Subcommittees: Fiscal Oversight, Audit, and Litigation (Chair); Supplementals (Chair)



How can lawyers help to revitalize Michigan?

Help build a legal framework that's easy to understand and easy to comply with.

Representative Stacy L. Erwin Oakes (D-95, Saginaw)

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

Standing Committees: Agriculture; Judiciary

Statutory Standing Committee: Legislative Council



How can lawyers help to revitalize Michigan?

One of the most important ways that lawyers can help revitalize Michigan is by continuing to be active in the legislative process. There is no shortage of analysis being offered today by experts in the social sciences regarding the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services and the theory and management of economies or the economic system. While this information gives us ideas for revitalizing our economy, it would go nowhere without the skills and expertise of lawyers who put it into action by advocating for legislative action, assisting legislators with understanding the vast amount of information we face every day, helping organizations implement new laws, and using the court system for redress that improves public policy. In all these ways, lawyers play a key role in driving the actions that will revitalize Michigan.

As a member of the Bar for almost 10 years and having prosecuted and defended cases in courts across Michigan and some on behalf of the state, I can honestly say I am a better lawyer today than I was when I began my career. I am pleased to use those skills today in public service. I believe that my colleagues in the legislature who are lawyers have a unique skill set that serves them well in being effective in representing their constituents, analyzing complex issues, and finding bipartisan solutions. I am honored to serve among them as a member of the State Bar of Michigan and delighted to have a key role in revitalizing Michigan.

Representative Richard Thomas Olson (R-55, Saline)

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Bar Admit Date: February 11, 2010
Law School: Stanford Law School

Standing Committees: Banking and Financial Services; Tax Policy; Transportation

Statutory Standing Committee: Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (Chair)



How can lawyers help to revitalize Michigan?

Support a small business agenda.

Representative Rashida Tlaib (D-12, Detroit)

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

Standing Committee: Appropriations

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



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 Committees: Judiciary (Chair); Tax Policy (Minority Vice Chair)

Statutory Standing Committee: Legislative Council



How can lawyers help to revitalize Michigan?

When Governor Rick Snyder talks about "reinventing Michigan," he is looking to all sectors of our society for ways to create better opportunities for our state. This includes areas relating to the practice of law and the administration of justice. I know that the attorneys serving in the legislature will be considering new ways to reform business taxes and the corrections department as well as create a more efficient court system. Through these reforms and the disciplined approach of all those in the legal profession, I have no doubt that we can contribute to the revitalization of the state of Michigan.