

Welcoming the Twenty-first Century: The Rebranding of the Representative Assembly



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The Representative Assembly has undertaken an extensive analysis of its own Rules of Permanent Procedure to provide its members the tools needed to represent their attorney constituents and fulfill its mission as the final policymaking body of the State Bar of Michigan. Those rule changes were proposed and debated at the Assembly's biannual meeting, which took place September 26–28 at the NEXT Conference in Grand Rapids.

Of particular importance was the passage of a joint resolution presented by SBM President-elect Jennifer Grieco and incoming Assembly Chair Richard Cunningham, identifying the need for a governance task force to be staffed by leadership from both the SBM Board of Commissioners and Representative Assembly. The proposal identified the following priorities:

- Improvement in the administration of justice and advancement of jurisprudence given the accelerated pace of change in the development and delivery of legal services;
- Reexamination of the way the SBM carries out and funds its mandate in view of recent developments in First Amendment jurisprudence; and
- Acknowledgment that technology and greater access to relevant data afford potentially beneficial means to carry out the SBM's mission.

Once adopted and implemented by the Board of Commissioners, this task force will report its findings and make material recommendations impacting the manner in which the Assembly works with and through the Board of Commissioners, the Michigan Supreme Court, and other stakeholders on issues of policy within its mission. Findings are expected to be reported in the first quarter of 2020.

Internally, the Assembly's members and leaders have been actively analyzing its processes to create a more nimble and responsive body with an eye toward reinvigorating and rebranding the Assembly as a whole. Those efforts are reflected in multiple revisions to our Rules of Permanent Procedure proposed by several of its standing committees, as summarized below:

- Assembly Review Committee: Proposal creating procedural rules for conducting virtual meetings and an internet-based debate/discussion forum.
- Drafting Committee: Proposal clarifying and specifying its function in the process of gathering and presenting proposals to the general membership of the Representative Assembly.
- Hearings Committee: Proposal to expand its membership and facilitate outreach to the general SBM membership on permissible issues of public policy falling within the Assembly's present jurisdiction.
- Rules and Calendar Committee: Proposal for amending calendar items during full sessions of the Assembly.

The Assembly also accepted the nomination and filling of multiple assemblyperson seats representing judicial circuits throughout Michigan. A contested election for the

clerk position between nominees David E. Gilbert (Calhoun County prosecutor) and Bernard A. Jocuns (Bernard Anthony Jocuns and Associates, PLLC, Upper Thumb Law Offices) was also conducted. Results are available for viewing on the Assembly web page at <https://www.michbar.org/generalinfo/repasssembly>. Last but certainly not least, the Assembly presented its Michael Frank Award to U.S. District Court Judge Victoria A. Roberts and its Unsung Hero Award to attorney Michele P. Fuller.

During the previous year, the Assembly underwent a significant introspective analysis of its operations and is now well positioned to become the responsive and representative body it was originally intended to be. This analysis involved significant input from SBM staff and past and present leaders of the Board of Commissioners. Of course, the efforts of all Assembly members are reflected in these revisions, which will be of great utility to the SBM for years to come.

These changes are long overdue and consistent with the 21st Century Practice Task Force and SBM Strategic Plan. It has been my honor to lead this robust group of highly qualified and committed professionals. I look forward to the Representative Assembly's future accomplishments and anticipate great things to come. ■

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