

# MICHIGAN'S LAWYER-LEGISLATORS of the 100th State Legislature

*By Peter Cunningham, Kathryn Hennessey, and Samantha Meinke*



When the 100th legislature of the state of Michigan officially convened on January 9, the state had entirely new leadership. In addition to a new governor, attorney general, and secretary of state, there are new leaders in the Michigan House of Representatives and the Senate. After the 2018 election, both legislative chambers remain under Republican control, but with Democrat Gretchen Whitmer taking over as governor, the state has split control for the first time since 2010. The Republican majorities in both chambers narrowed: the House includes 58 Republicans and 52 Democrats, and the Senate has 22 Republicans and 16 Democrats.

Lee Chatfield (R–Levering) was elected House speaker and Christine Greig (D–Farmington Hills) was elected House Democratic leader. In the Senate, Mike Shirkey (R–Clarklake) was elected majority leader and Jim Ananich (D–Flint) was reelected minority leader. This is the first time since 2006 that none of the four legislative leaders are lawyers.

Of the 148 legislators, 15 are attorneys—an increase over the past two sessions that saw a historic low number of attorneys.

Attorneys are not evenly divided between the chambers, however. Peter Lucido is the sole attorney in the Senate, marking the first time since the State Bar of Michigan became unified in 1935 that a legislative chamber has had only one attorney. Seven of the lawyer-legislators are Republicans and eight are Democrats.

The attorneys in the legislature have very different backgrounds. Many left thriving private practices to serve in public office and bring their expertise in a broad range of legal areas—including criminal law, real estate, disability law, family law, and probate and estate planning—to the legislature. Please read the following profiles to learn more about them. ■

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*Peter Cunningham is assistant executive director and director of governmental relations for the State Bar of Michigan.*

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*Kathryn Hennessey is public policy counsel for the State Bar of Michigan.*

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## Senate

### Senator Peter Lucido, Majority Whip (R-8, Shelby Township)



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Bar Admit Date: May 20, 1988  
Law School: Detroit College of Law

Standing Committees: Advice & Consent (Chair);  
Elections; Judiciary & Public Safety (Chair);  
Oversight (Vice Chair)

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

Sen. Lucido joins the Michigan Senate for his first term after serving two terms in the Michigan House of Representatives. He is a member of the Criminal Justice Caucus. Last year, Lucido sponsored 134 bills, 23 of which were signed into law—more than any other member of the state House. His legislative accomplishments include increasing juror compensation, ensuring that all of arrestees' information is expunged from their permanent record when charges against them are dropped before trial, and reforming laws related to traffic stops. In the coming year, Lucido hopes to reform civil asset forfeiture. Before his service in the legislature, he practiced law at Lucido & Manzella in Clinton Township.

## House of Representatives

### Representative Ryan Berman (R-39, Wixom, Commerce Township, West Bloomfield Township, and Wolverine Lake)



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Bar Admit Date: May 27, 2005  
Law School: Wayne State University Law School

Standing Committees: Financial Services; Insurance;  
Judiciary; Regulatory Reform (Vice Chair)

Rep. Berman is serving his first term in the Michigan House of Representatives. In his short time in office, he has already joined a bipartisan team to increase government transparency by subjecting the state legislature to a new Legislative Open Records Act, and the governor and lieutenant governor to the Freedom of Information Act. He hopes to tackle no-fault automotive insurance reform to lower costs, curtail fraud, and limit frivolous lawsuits, and make court information and documents available for free to the public. Before serving in the state House, Berman was a general practice attorney in Bloomfield Hills, working in many areas, including international business, real estate, and criminal law. He has served on the SBM Criminal Jurisprudence & Practice Committee and the Character and Fitness Committee. He is a reserve police officer and was an Oakland County Sheriff's Office reserve deputy.

### Representative Kyra Bolden (D-35, Southfield, Lathrup Village, Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms, and Franklin)



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Bar Admit Date: December 8, 2014  
Law School: University of Detroit Mercy  
School of Law

Standing Committees: Insurance; Judiciary

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

Rep. Bolden is in her first term in the Michigan House of Representatives and will serve as Democratic vice chair of the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules. During her term in office, she hopes to revamp no-fault automotive insurance to lower rates for state residents. Before serving in the legislature, Bolden practiced civil litigation with a focus on no-fault insurance law at Lewis & Munday in Detroit. She is a member of the Wolverine Bar Association and Women Lawyers Association of Michigan and was a member of the Total Living Commission for the city of Southfield.

### Representative Brian Elder

(D-96, Bay City, Essexville, Bangor, Frankenlust, Hampton, Kawkawlin, Merritt, Monitor, and Portsmouth townships)



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Bar Admit Date: November 18, 1998  
Law School: UCLA School of Law

Standing Committees: Agriculture  
(Minority Vice Chair); Judiciary

Rep. Elder is serving his second term in the House of Representatives. He comes from a long line of automotive workers and is chair and cofounder of the Michigan Legislative Labor Caucus. In addition, he was reappointed to the Michigan Law Revision Commission, a group that works to eliminate antiquated laws. During his first term, Elder advocated for a Health Care Bill of Rights and to make prescription drugs more affordable. He also introduced bills to protect drivers who hit potholes from having their insurance rates raised and to grant parents leave from work to attend parent-teacher conferences. Before serving in the House, Elder ran a small, general civil practice law firm in Auburn and was on the Bay County Board of Commissioners.

### Representative Graham Filler

(R-93, Ithaca and the townships of Sumner, Arcada, New Haven, North Shade, Newark, Fulton, Washington, North Star, Elba, Hamilton, Lafayette, and Wheeler)



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Bar Admit Date: June 6, 2011  
Law School: University of Detroit Mercy School of Law

Standing Committees: Energy; Health Policy;  
Judiciary (Chair); Regulatory Reform

Rep. Filler is currently serving his first term in the Michigan House of Representatives. He is a member of the Criminal Justice Caucus and will chair the Judiciary Committee, the first time in two decades that a freshman representative has done so. During his time in the House, he hopes to codify laws for legal marijuana use and the handling of those who drive while under the influence of marijuana. In addition, he hopes to tackle civil asset forfeiture, funding sources for expanded juvenile caseloads, expungement for low-level misdemeanors, and ensuring that 17-year-olds are treated as minors in most nonviolent criminal cases. Before joining the House, Filler was an assistant attorney general. He is active with the SafeCenter and his local Kiwanis Club, being named Kiwanian of the Year in 2014.

### Representative Vanessa Guerra

(D-95, Saginaw, Zilwaukee, Bridgeport, Buena Vista, Carrollton, James, Kochville, Spaulding, and Zilwaukee townships)



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Bar Admit Date: January 18, 2018  
Law School: University of Detroit Mercy School of Law

Standing Committees: Elections Ethics  
(Minority Vice Chair); Judiciary

Rep. Guerra is serving her third term in the Michigan House of Representatives. During the last legislative term, she introduced legislation to increase protections for vulnerable adults and victims of sexual assault and child abuse, increase government transparency, and create more fair employment practices for state government employees. In addition, she served on the Michigan Legislative Council's Criminal Justice Policy Commission. She completed law school and passed the bar exam while serving in the state House. During law school, Guerra interned with the Saginaw County Prosecutor's Office and volunteered as an advocate for domestic violence victims. Before joining the House, she was a Bridgeport Township trustee.

### Representative Jim Haadsma

(D-62, Battle Creek, Springfield, Albion, and the townships of Albion, Bedford, Clarence, Convis, Lee, Pennfield, and Sheridan)



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Bar Admit Date: November 8, 1984  
Law School: Wayne State University Law School

Standing Committees: Energy; Transportation

Rep. Haadsma is in his first term in the Michigan House of Representatives. Two of his biggest priorities in office are ensuring that the state's roads are fixed and passing an affordable, environmentally friendly energy policy. Before serving in the House, Haadsma practiced law at McCrosky Law, focusing on representing injured workers in workers' compensation and Social Security disability cases, including representing clients through the Legal Services of South Central Michigan pro bono panel. He has also worked for Legal Aid of Western Michigan. He is a member of the SBM Social Security Section Council and was an officer for the Calhoun County Bar Association and a Calhoun County commissioner. He serves as legal redress chair of the Battle Creek branch of the NAACP and on the Gryphon Place Alternative Dispute Resolution Council.

## Representative Matt Hall

(R-63, south and central Calhoun County and eastern Kalamazoo County)



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Bar Admit Date: November 13, 2017  
Law School: Western Michigan University  
Cooley Law School

Standing Committees: Education; Oversight (Chair); Regulatory Reform; Tax Policy

Rep. Hall is in his first term in the Michigan House of Representatives and will chair the Oversight Committee. He hopes to work to improve Michigan infrastructure, lower automotive insurance rates, and strengthen the economy. Hall is a member of the SBM Administrative & Regulatory Law, Real Property, and Solo & Small Firm sections. Before serving in the state House, he worked as a solo practitioner and was a liaison for the Michigan Attorney General's Office.

## Representative Kara Hope

(D-67, Mason, Stockbridge, Leslie, Webberville, Williamston, Dansville, Holt, Onondaga, and South Lansing)



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Bar Admit Date: June 17, 2003  
Law School: Western Michigan University  
Cooley Law School

Standing Committees: Commerce & Tourism; Elections Ethics; Local Government & Municipal Finance

Rep. Hope is serving her first term in the Michigan House of Representatives and has already introduced a bill to provide more local control to counties on spending for criminal apprehension and prosecution. In her first term in the state House, she hopes to increase funding for education and infrastructure, improve the outlook of seniors, and increase access to healthcare. Hope has practiced criminal defense and family law and has worked as a pre-hearing attorney for the Michigan Court of Appeals. She has also taught as an adjunct professor at Western Michigan University Cooley Law School. She served as chairperson for the Ingham County Board of Commissioners and the Tri-County Aging Consortium Board, and was founding president of the Holt Community Arts Council. She has provided pro bono legal services to Elder Law of Michigan, the Sam Corey Senior Center Club, and the Mid-Michigan Environmental Action Council. While in law school, Hope was managing editor of the Cooley Law Review.

## Representative Gary Howell

(R-82, Lapeer County)



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Bar Admit Date: October 28, 1974  
Law School: University of Michigan Law School

Standing Committees: Judiciary; Local Government & Municipal Finance; Natural Resources & Outdoor Recreation; Transportation

Rep. Howell is serving his second term in the Michigan House of Representatives. He not only brings decades of legal experience to the legislature, but he is also a lifelong farmer. During his first term in the state House, Howell introduced a number of bills focused on hunting, natural resources, and the environment. He also proposed a constitutional amendment that would eliminate lame-duck lawmaking. Before serving in the state House, Howell practiced law at Taylor Butterfield Howell Churchill & Garner in Lapeer and was an attorney to several local municipalities. In addition, he was president of the Lapeer County Bar Association and chair of the Lapeer County Road Commission. He received the Farm Bureau Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award in 2005.

## Representative David LaGrand

(D-75, Grand Rapids)



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Bar Admit Date: November 20, 1992  
Law School: University of Chicago Law School

Standing Committees: Judiciary (Minority Vice Chair); Oversight

Rep. LaGrand is serving his second term in the Michigan House of Representatives and is a member of the Criminal Justice Caucus. He brings both legal and entrepreneurial expertise to the legislature. In his first term in office, he introduced bills to increase transparency in the electoral process and reform the state's bail system. For this term, LaGrand continues to concentrate on criminal justice system reforms and government transparency and is also focused on investing in education, helping small businesses create good-paying jobs, and protecting the environment. Before serving in public office and after working in private practice at Warner, Norcross & Judd and as an assistant prosecutor, LaGrand opened his own private practice, focusing on family and criminal law. He served on the Grand Rapids Board of Education and Grand Rapids City Commission. He is also a small-business owner and started a construction company, coffee shop, bakery, and distillery.

**Representative Isaac Robinson**

(D-4, Hamtramck and Detroit)



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Bar Admit Date: January 5, 2006  
Law School: Northwestern University  
School of Law

Standing Committees: Commerce & Tourism;  
Regulatory Reform; Tax Policy

Rep. Robinson is in his first term in the Michigan House of Representatives. He hopes to work to reform no-fault automotive insurance, protect natural resources, and help ensure justice for all, including those with disabilities. Before serving in the state House, Robinson's work focused on protecting workers' rights, including helping workers organize. He also led grassroots efforts for the Detroit City Council to prevent foreclosures and helped reestablish the Detroit City Council Disability Task Force. In 2010, Robinson was named ARC Detroit Public Servant of the Year. In 2008, the University of Michigan Council for Disability Concerns recognized Robinson for his work with people with disabilities.

**Representative Douglas Wozniak**

(R-36, Bruce, Washington, Shelby Township, and Romeo)



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Bar Admit Date: May 26, 1998  
Law School: University of Michigan Law School

Standing Committees: Communications &  
Technology; Families, Children & Seniors;  
Health Policy; Judiciary

Statutory Standing Committee: Joint Committee on Administrative Rules

Rep. Wozniak is serving his first term in the Michigan House of Representatives. He hopes to make improvements to state infrastructure, stop taxing pensions, and improve services for citizens who need them from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Wozniak received his law degree when he was 50 years old. After working for other law firms, he opened his own practice focusing on probate, estate planning, real estate, and elder law. Wozniak is also a small-business owner and a licensed insurance and real estate agent. Before running for state office, he served on the Shelby Township Board of Trustees. Wozniak is a member of the SBM Business Law, Elder Law and Disability Rights, Probate and Estate Planning, and Real Property Law sections and volunteers for the Kiwanis, Lions, and Optimist clubs and the St. Kieran's Knights of Columbus.

**Representative Tenisha Yancey**

(D-1, Grosse Pointe Woods, Harper Woods, Village of Grosse Pointe Shores, and Detroit)



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Bar Admit Date: May 27, 2014  
Law School: University of Detroit Mercy  
School of Law

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

After winning a special election and serving a partial term in the last legislative session, Rep. Yancey is now in her first full term in the Michigan House of Representatives. She hopes to focus on increasing education funding, reducing insurance rates, and enacting policy to help bolster Michigan's employment rates. Before joining the state House, Yancey served Wayne County as a prosecutor in the juvenile division, governmental relations executive, community outreach program coordinator for the Wayne County Executive's Office, and project manager and interim director for the Wayne County Land Bank. She was also on the Harper Woods School Board.

**Representative Jeff Yaroch**

(R-33, Armada Township, Lenox Township, Macomb Township, Ray Township, Richmond Township, Richmond, Memphis, New Haven, and Armada)



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Bar Admit Date: May 6, 2011  
Law School: Western Michigan University  
Cooley Law School

Standing Committee: Appropriations

Appropriations Subcommittees: Health & Human Services; Judiciary;  
Licensing & Regulatory Affairs/Insurance & Financial Services (Chair);  
Transportation (Vice Chair)

Rep. Yaroch is in his second term in the Michigan House of Representatives. During his first term he was the primary sponsor of 51 bills, including measures to revise the state's no-fault insurance laws, provide training and protection for firefighters, and rework emergency financial manager laws. This term, he is focused on improving the state's infrastructure, proposing a measure to redirect an additional \$60 million from revenue raised from the Indian Gaming Compact to improve roads. Before serving in the state House, Yaroch spent 25 years with the Clinton Township Fire Department as a firefighter, paramedic, and battalion chief. He was also on the Richmond City Council.