

Lawyer-Legislators of the 93rd State Legislature

It is with pleasure that we present the 21 lawyer-legislators of the 93rd State Legislature of Michigan.

The following information was compiled with the assistance of each lawyer-legislator. After each legislator's name, you will find their party affiliation, district, hometown, Lansing office contact information, email address, date of admittance to the State Bar of Michigan, law school from which they graduated, assignments to standing committees and/or appropriations subcommittees, and a short biography. Each lawyer-legislator was also asked to respond to the same two questions, which are printed with each response.

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 may be addressed to The Honorable (full name), State Representative, State Capitol, P.O. Box 30014, Lansing, MI 48909-7514.

Senator Michael D. Bishop (R-12, Rochester)

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Bar Admit Date: May 14, 1993
Law School: Detroit College of Law

Standing Committees: Banking and Financial Institutions (Chair),
Gaming and Casino Oversight (Vice Chair), Judiciary (Vice Chair)

Statutory Standing Committee: Administrative Rules (Chair)

Senator Bishop is serving his first term and is Assistant Majority Leader. He served as a State Representative from 1999–2002, is a partner in a law firm, and is licensed to practice in Washington, D.C., and before the Supreme Court of the United States of America. He is a member of the American Bar Association. Senator Bishop and his wife Cristina have two children.

How has your legal training helped you as an elected official?

“Prior legal training is an enormous advantage. Understanding and having experience in the application of the law and seeing first-hand its ultimate impact on society greatly assists in my role as a policy maker. Working with law clients is also a priceless asset in my present role as an advocate and public servant.”

From your perspective, what is the most pressing issue facing the legal profession today?

“Maintaining our reputation as a profession and directly responding to those groups who conveniently use the legal profession as the root cause of all problems in our state and country.”



Senator Hansen H. Clarke (D-1, Detroit)

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Bar Admit Date: February 12, 1988
Law School: Georgetown University

Standing Committees: Appropriations

Appropriations Subcommittees: Capital Outlay; Department of Community Health; History, Arts, and Libraries (Minority Vice Chair); State Police and Military Affairs (Minority Vice Chair)

Senator Clarke is in his first term and is Assistant Minority Caucus Chair. He served two terms as a State Representative, where he held the position of Majority Whip (91–92). He has worked as an aide to Congressman John Conyers and former Wayne County Executive Ed McNamara. Senator Clarke is a native Detroiter.

How has your legal training helped you as an elected official?

“It has helped me tremendously in understanding the constitutional limits on governmental action, analyzing elements of legislation, and understanding how to develop policy that effectively accomplishes the public objective.”

From your perspective, what is the most pressing issue facing the legal profession today?

“Unwarranted attacks on the integrity of the profession, especially attacks on trial lawyers as a group.”

Senator Alan L. Cropsey (R-33, DeWitt)

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Bar Admit Date: May 5, 1978
Law School: Thomas M. Cooley

Standing Committees: Appropriations, Judiciary (Chair)

Appropriations Subcommittees: Capital Outlay; Judiciary and Corrections (Chair); K-12, School Aid, Education (Vice Chair); Retirement (Vice Chair)

Senator Cropsey is in his first post-term limits term as a State Senator, having previously served as a State Senator from 1983–1986, and is Assistant Majority Floor Leader. He served five terms as a State Representative and was a partner in a law firm from 1987–1991. Senator Cropsey and his wife Erika have four children.

How has your legal training helped you as an elected official?

“My legal training has given me a good foundation of the law. As an attorney I also understand how the law affects people on a personal level.”



From your perspective, what is the most pressing issue facing the legal profession today?

“The legal profession must have credibility with the public. The image of attorneys with the public is not flattering. We must demonstrate to the public professionalism, competence, and integrity.”

Senator Bruce C. Patterson (R-7, Canton)

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Bar Admit Date: December 14, 1972
Law School: Wayne State University

Standing Committees: Health Policy (Vice Chair), Judiciary, Natural Resources & Environmental Affairs (Vice Chair), Technology and Energy (Chair)

Statutory Standing Committee: Legislative Council

Senator Patterson is in his first Senate term. He served two terms as a State Representative, where he held the positions of Associate Speaker Pro Tem (99–01) and Majority Floor Leader (00–02). He also served three years on the Wayne County Commission and has been an attorney in private practice for over 20 years. Senator Patterson is a Fellow of the Michigan State Bar Foundation, and a member of the American Bar Association and a number of local and specialty bar associations. Senator Patterson and his wife Phyllis have three children and have resided in Canton for more than 25 years.

How has your legal training helped you as an elected official?

“My legal training provided a strong foundation in logic and reasoning. It has helped me prepare to question witnesses who appear before the committees I have chaired. I have been compared to ‘a surgeon with a scalpel’ for my precise questioning of those testifying before Legislative committees.

It has also given me the ability to understand the complex legal arguments made for and against legislative proposals, and to educate my colleagues on the nuances of purported facts.

While in the House, I saw the need, and created a Lawyers’ Caucus, to help shape better outcomes in the Majority Caucus, despite some jaundiced eyes. Too often, my colleagues tend to preface their remarks by saying, ‘Well, I am not a lawyer, but . . .’ as a way of trying to avoid criticism if what they say is not quite legally defensible. How ironic for a Law-Maker!”

From your perspective, what is the most pressing issue facing the legal profession today?

“The respect of the profession is an important issue. Even in William Shakespeare’s day, he could get a good crowd reaction by having a character say, ‘Kill all the lawyers!’ Certain of our colleagues do not seem to put the broad public good ahead of personal aggrandizement. This is what besmirches the honest efforts of the



great majority to uphold the integrity of the Constitution and our laws. Twisting the original sense of these, against the common good, is dishonorable.”

Representative Stephen F. Adamini (D-109, Marquette)

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Bar Admit Date: November 24, 1970
Law School: University of Michigan

Standing Committees: Health Policy (Minority Vice Chair), Insurance, Judiciary

Representative Adamini is in his third and final term. He was an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney in Marquette County and is a partner in a law firm. Representative Adamini was born and raised in Marquette County where he now lives with his wife Linda. They have two children.

How has your legal training helped you as an elected official?

“Legal analysis of proposed legislation; ability to marshal argument; speaking skills.”

From your perspective, what is the most pressing issue facing the legal profession today?

“Poor public image, which is not helped by lawyer bashing politicians.”

Representative Steven M. Bieda (D-25, Warren)

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Bar Admit Date: May 18, 1993
Law School: University of Detroit Mercy

Standing Committees: Employment Relations, Training and Safety (Minority Vice Chair); Judiciary; Tax Policy

Representative Bieda is in his second term. He has worked as a director of labor relations and as an attorney with the Michigan House of Representatives. Representative Bieda is a lifelong resident of Michigan.

How has your legal training helped you as an elected official?

“As a legislator, I frequently review statutes, question testimony, and read court cases in the formation of public policy. Analytical skills developed and honed in law school and nurtured in the practice of law have made me a better legislator.”

From your perspective, what is the most pressing issue facing the legal profession today?



“Probably the most pressing problem facing the legal profession is the incremental assault on civil liberties being waged in this nation today.”

Representative Pamela G. Byrnes (D-52, Chelsea)

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Bar Admit Date: May 6, 1976
Law School: University of Maryland

Standing Committees: Higher Education and Career Preparation (Minority Vice Chair); Natural Resources, Great Lakes, Land Use, and Environment; Transportation

Representative Byrnes is in her first term. Her 27-year law practice has focused primarily on family law. She has served as a Washtenaw County Road Commissioner and Director of the Washtenaw County Friend of the Court. Representative Byrnes and her husband Kent Brown have two children.

How has your legal training helped you as an elected official?

“The obvious skill acquired from my many years of practice is that of advocacy and being able to concisely address issues. I also applied my trial/hearing preparation skills to appearances at public forums and debates. Being prepared on the issues is essential to being an effective legislator. Another skill that comes with legal training that I will be applying is that of research and enquiry. As I take on committee assignments, I will be using these research skills to tackle the issues brought before the committee.”

From your perspective, what is the most pressing issue facing the legal profession today?

“Efficient and effective case management. While we need to be facilitating the process for a case to get through the court system, I don't think that a ‘one size fits all’ approach is suitable to all cases. We certainly must be finding avenues to dispose of cases in a more timely manner, but we need to make allowances for those cases that require more time for discovery and preparation. We should also be examining and developing an effective mechanism to divert and/or settle disputes prior to filing a complaint.

I would also like to see more emphasis on ethics for attorneys and imposition of sanctions where necessary.”

Representative Paul F. Condino (D-35, Southfield)

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Bar Admit Date: November 21, 1986
Law School: Detroit College of Law



Standing Committees: Insurance, Judiciary, Tax Policy
(Minority Vice Chair)

Representative Condino is in his second term. He was previously a partner at a law firm where he focused on the trial/litigation section of the firm, and specialized in workers compensation, employment law, Elliott-Larsen civil rights and disability cases, and other workers' rights cases. He has also served as a Special Assistant Attorney General under former Attorneys General Kelley and Granholm. Representative Condino and his wife Sue have two children.

How has your legal training helped you as an elected official?

"Absolutely! My legal experience and 18 years as a trial attorney have especially helped with my service on the Judiciary Committee."

From your perspective, what is the most pressing issue facing the legal profession today?

"The most pressing issue facing the legal profession is the legislative intent by some to deprive families and working families proper access to courts and specifically jury trials. This is dangerous and must be addressed!"

Representative George Cushingberry, Jr. (D-8, Detroit)

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Bar Admit Date: April 29, 1994
Law School: University of Detroit Mercy

Standing Committees: Appropriations

Appropriations Subcommittees: Family Independence Agency, Judiciary (Minority Vice Chair)

Representative Cushingberry is in his first post-term limits term as a State Representative, having previously served as a State Representative from 1974 to 1982. He served as a Wayne County Commissioner for 16 years. Representative Cushingberry and his wife Maria Drew have two sons.

How has your legal training helped you as an elected official?

It has helped me see things from a neutral perspective. It has also made me see things more analytically.

From your perspective, what is the most pressing issue facing the legal profession today?

Integrity and finding good lawyers.

Representative Andrew J. Dillon (D-17, Redford Township)

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Bar Admit Date: December 29, 1989
Law School: University of Notre Dame

Standing Committees: Banking & Financial Services, Commerce, Energy and Technology

Representative Dillon is in his first term. He has been the managing director of a private equity fund, a steel company executive, finance company vice-president, and a private practitioner in addition to serving as Magistrate for the 157th District Court. Representative Dillon and his wife Carol have four children.

How has your legal training helped you as an elected official?

"My legal education is extremely helpful because it is important to understand the interplay between the Constitution, laws, and regulations as well as the differing roles of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. Additionally, having experience in the legal profession is helpful in that you are exposed to so many different aspects of society. One day you may be learning about a particular line of business by taking a deposition of a business owner and the next day you may be negotiating to resolve a regulatory dispute between a private citizen and a governmental agency. All of these varied experiences prepare you to serve in government because you learn where we need to modify the rules governing our society and, more importantly, teach you that often times legislation or governmental action have unintended negative consequences."

From your perspective, what is the most pressing issue facing the legal profession today?

"The pressure to treat the legal profession more as a business than a profession."

Representative Kevin A. Elsenheimer (R-105, Bellaire)

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Bar Admit Date: November 1, 1993
Law School: Wayne State University

Standing Committees: Education; House Oversight, Elections and Ethics (Majority Vice Chair); Judiciary; Local Government and Urban Policy (Majority Vice Chair); Natural Resources, Great Lakes, Land Use, and Environment

Representative Elsenheimer is in his first term and is Associate Speaker Pro Tempore. He was an assistant prosecutor in Antrim County before forming his own law firm that focuses on municipal law. Representative Elsenheimer and his wife Ann have three children.

How has your legal training helped you as an elected official?

"Politics is rightly called the art of compromise. Experience with litigation and negotiation continues to assist me in practicing politics. I have also noticed that running a law office is similar to



running an effective constituent services office out of Lansing. My law practice was about assisting clients in finding solutions to their legal problems; it is my job in Lansing to assist in providing solutions to constituent problems and to act as a conduit to (and through) the state bureaucracy.”

From your perspective, what is the most pressing issue facing the legal profession today?

“Rightly or wrongly, attorneys are being held partially responsible for driving up the costs of providing health care and other types of insurance coverage in this state. As such, whenever solutions are discussed, legal reform tends to be part of that discussion.”

Representative Edward J. Gaffney (R-1, Grosse Pointe)

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Bar Admit Date: May 7, 1976
Law School: Thomas M. Cooley

Standing Committees: Health Policy (Chair); House Oversight, Elections and Ethics; Insurance; Regulatory Reform



Representative Gaffney is in his second term. He has served as legal counsel for the Michigan Legislative Services Bureau, regional government affairs director of the American Automobile Manufacturers Association, director of the Michigan Center for Truck Safety, and Mayor of Grosse Pointe Farms. Representative Gaffney and his wife Jane have three children.

How has your legal training helped you as an elected official?

“It has given me the confidence to run for office and the analytical ability to represent my constituency well, once elected.”

From your perspective, what is the most pressing issue facing the legal profession today?

“The most pressing issue should be improving the public perception of the legal profession. We need to educate the public on the value to society of the legal profession.”

Representative Matthew O. Gillard (D-106, Alpena)

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Bar Admit Date: January 9, 2001
Law School: Wayne State University

Standing Committees: Conservation, Forestry, and Outdoor Recreation; House Oversight, Elections and Ethics; Natural Resources, Great Lakes, Land Use, and Environment (Minority Vice Chair)



Representative Gillard is in his second term. He has worked as an associate in private practice. Representative Gillard lives with his wife Jessica in Alpena, where he was born and raised.

How has your legal training helped you as an elected official?

“My legal training has helped my communication skills tremendously. The ability to formulate and articulate an argument is fundamental to legal training and also fundamental to success as an elected official.”

From your perspective, what is the most pressing issue facing the legal profession today?

“The most pressing issue facing the legal profession is the danger posed by a partisan, conservative court.”

Representative David Law (R-39, West Bloomfield)

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Bar Admit Date: June 9, 1995
Law School: Detroit College of Law at Michigan State University

Standing Committees: Commerce, Insurance, Judiciary, Transportation (Majority Vice Chair)



Representative Law is in his first term. His legal career has been primarily focused in criminal law, probate, insurance defense, and domestic relations and began as a sole practitioner, followed by mid-size law firm practice, and service as an assistant prosecuting attorney in Oakland County.

How has your legal training helped you as an elected official?

“My legal training has assisted me as an elected official by enhancing my ability to look at both sides of an issue and come up with a reasonable solution. In addition, having spent almost every day in the courtroom as an assistant prosecutor has helped me develop advocacy skills that I use when trying to persuade others on policy issues. Courtroom experience has also made me a comfortable public speaker.”

From your perspective, what is the most pressing issue facing the legal profession today?

“The legal profession faces a public perception problem. By some, lawyers are inaccurately viewed as unethical and/or solely driven by money. That obviously is not true for a vast majority of lawyers and we, as members of the profession, have an obligation to change this perception whenever and wherever the opportunity presents itself.”

Representative Alexander C. Lipsey (D-60, Kalamazoo)

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Bar Admit Date: October 26, 1977
Law School: University of Michigan

Standing Committees: Government Operations, Higher Education and Career Preparation, Judiciary (Minority Vice Chair)

Representative Lipsey is in his third and final term. His legal practice focuses primarily on trustee practice and bankruptcy. He is a member of the Federal Bar Association and the National Bar Association. Representative Lipsey and his wife Anne have two children.

How has your legal training helped you as an elected official?

"The development of critical, analytical skills necessary to practice law has been very helpful developing meaningful legislation. I have also been able to hear all sides of an issue. This helps me formulate better public policy."

From your perspective, what is the most pressing issue facing the legal profession today?

"Finding ways to ensure access to justice."

Representative William C. McConico (D-5, Detroit)

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Bar Admit Date: May 23, 2002
Law School: Case Western University

Standing Committees: Commerce, Judiciary

Representative McConico is in his third and final term. He is a sole practitioner and hosts a weekly talk radio/television show in Highland Park that focuses on legal and political issues in Southeast Michigan. He belongs to a number of leadership and justice organizations. Representative McConico, a lifelong resident of Detroit, and his wife Marquitta have one child.

How has your legal training helped you as an elected official?

"It has certainly aided my critical thinking and problem solving abilities. I believe that knowing the law puts me in a better position to write the law. While in Law School I studied the effects of Mandatory Minimums in Drug Sentencing on the Federal Level, which motivated me to introduce and eventually get signed into law, legislation to eliminate mandatory minimums."

From your perspective, what is the most pressing issue facing the legal profession today?



"I feel that the lack of diversity within our profession is the most pressing issue today. Less than 4 percent of the legal profession is African American and less than 1 percent of that group are practicing in large law firms. This limits diversity of thought within those firms as well as access to those firms by underserved populations."

Representative Tory M. Rocca (R-30, Sterling Heights)

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Bar Admit Date: May 11, 2000
Law School: University of Michigan

Standing Committees: Conservation, Forestry, and Outdoor Recreation; Judiciary; Regulatory Reform (Chair); Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security

Representative Rocca is in his first term as State Representative. He has previously worked as a liability examiner and has a private legal practice in the areas of premises liability defense, products liability defense, and business law.

Representative Tonya Schuitmaker (R-80, Lawton)

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

Standing Committees: Commerce, Energy and Technology, Judiciary (Majority Vice Chair), Local Government and Urban Policy

Representative Schuitmaker is in her first term. She has worked as a partner in a law firm and concentrated in family, estate, business, and governmental law. She is a member of the American Bar Association, State Bar of Florida, and the State Bar of Illinois and has previously served on the State Bar of Michigan's Representative Assembly. She and her husband Steve have two children.

How has your legal training helped you as an elected official?

"With fewer and fewer attorneys serving in the legislature I believe my legal training to be a real asset. As a general practice practitioner, I have seen first hand how our laws affect Michigan's citizens. Sometimes what seems to be a good idea has unintended consequences, especially when implemented into real world settings. My legal training has helped me recognize and analyze bills so as to avoid these penalties as much as possible."

From your perspective, what is the most pressing issue facing the legal profession today?

"I believe that the most pressing issue facing the legal profession is the image of attorneys. We all need to work at improving the



public perception and strive to revitalize our profession as a noble endeavor intended for civic service in general.”

Representative John C. Stewart (R-20, Plymouth)

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Bar Admit Date: May 11, 1977
Law School: Detroit College of Law

Standing Committees: Appropriations

Appropriations Subcommittees: Higher Education (Chair),
Judiciary (Majority Vice Chair)

Representative Stewart is in his third and final term. He is a private practitioner in general practice for 28 years. Representative Stewart and his wife Beth have two children.

How has your legal training helped you as an elected official?

“Please know, I am the only legislator who has appeared as a lawyer in a courtroom in Wayne County at least every month for the last 28 years. I know that 26 years of applying the law aids me in my daily decision making process.”

From your perspective, what is the most pressing issue facing the legal profession today?

“Respect and credibility.”

Representative Steven H. Tobocman (D-12, Detroit)

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Bar Admit Date: November 12, 1997
Law School: University of Michigan

Standing Committees: Commerce; Government Operations
(Minority Vice Chair); Local Government and Urban Policy
(Minority Vice Chair)

Representative Tobocman is in his second term. He is the founder and former executive director of Community Legal Resources, a business law pro bono project of Michigan Legal Services and the ABA Business Law Section. He serves as a board or committee member on a number of legal service organizations and entities including the State Bar of Michigan Standing Committee on Justice Initiatives. He has provided free legal services to nonprofit organizations as both a Skadden Fellow and NAPIL Equal Justice Fellow. Representative Tobocman is married to Sharon Dolente, who is also an attorney.



How has your legal training helped you as an elected official?

“Being a lawyer has provided me with analytical skills that have been helpful in examining legislation, as well as training in business law issues relating to a number of issues before the Commerce and Local Government Committees upon which I sit.”

From your perspective, what is the most pressing issue facing the legal profession today?

“It continues to be providing equal access to justice. This would include expanding resources for civil legal services for the poor, as well as revamping Michigan’s public defender system. I also would include attacks on consumer and individual rights and liberties embodied in tort reform, fundamentalism, homeland security, and other political movements.”

Representative Gretchen E. Whitmer (D-69, East Lansing)

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

Standing Committee: Appropriations (Minority Vice Chair)

Appropriations Subcommittees: Fiscal Oversight, Audit and Litigation
(Minority Vice Chair); Higher Education; Joint Capital Outlay (Minority
Vice Chair); Supplementals (Minority Vice Chair)

Representative Whitmer is in her third and final term. She has worked as Policy Analyst for the House Democratic Policy Staff and as a corporate litigator specializing in administrative and regulatory law. She is a member of a number of legal and community leadership organizations. Representative Whitmer and her husband Gary Shrewsbury have two children.

How has your legal training helped you as an elected official?

“While a law degree is not a pre-requisite for service in the legislature, it is certainly helpful. Advocacy, practical knowledge of the application of our laws, and the ability to negotiate are all skills inherent in the practice of law and handy in the making of our laws.”

From your perspective, what is the most pressing issue facing the legal profession today?

“One issue with which I am personally concerned is the political rhetoric about ‘activist judges’ and ‘greedy lawyers’ with regard to a number of issues ranging from gay marriage to tort reform. These vitriolic phrases do a disservice to everyone in our profession. Like legislators, unfortunately, bad actors generate headlines and good actors rarely get acknowledgement. While there is much debate to be had on these and other issues of the day, it is critical that we conduct ourselves with decorum, particularly when debating and referring to one another.” ♦

