

Obiter Dictum

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Michigan's public defender system broken, speaker tells bar

Lobby for Muskegon: section speaker

Muskegon's a great place for summer State Bar section meetings, a Rochester family law attorney said. Elizabeth Sadowski, host of the SBM's family law "listserv," addressed



Elizabeth Sadowski

to tab Muskegon and its resources for continuing education and collegial fun.

local members and urged us to lobby SBM officials

The public defense system in Michigan is broken and needs "systemic reform," Kristin Vandenberg told MCBA members at a 10 October lunch meeting at the downtown Holiday Inn.

At the time of *Gideon v Wainwright* (1963), Michigan was at the forefront of criminal defense, said Vandenberg, of the Michigan Campaign for Justice. Today, every county sets its own rules and budgets. As a result, "which side of the county line determines the type of justice" that results, she said.

Because Michigan has no standardized statewide sys-

tem it is difficult to determine the best way to discover the extent of the problem or possible repairs, she said. A study now is under way to provide information to lawmakers concerning the scope of the problem.

The Michigan Coalition for Justice – a related organization – filed suit this year against the State of Michigan regarding criminal defense issues. Muskegon is one of three counties identified as deficient by the lawsuit but the county is not a party to the litigation.

"The lawsuit is not directed at lawyers, but at [the state]," Ms. Vandenberg

said. "It recognizes most criminal defense attorneys do their best to give good representation to their clients."

Patricia Steele, 14th Circuit Court administrator, asked several pointed questions regarding funding.



Kristin Vandenberg

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Additional information:
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Lingua Latina alive in daily courtroom symbol

COAT-OF-ARMS AND FLAG Act 209 of 1911

AN ACT to adopt and prescribe the design of a state coat-of-arms and state flag, and their use, and to prohibit the use of the same for advertising purposes, and to provide a punishment for such forbidden use.

History: 1911, Act 209, Eff. Aug. 1, 1911



Every state courtroom in Michigan presents visitors with mottoes in the Latin language.

What do they mean?
E Pluribus Unum, "Out of many, one." (Taken from US).
Tuebor, "I will defend."

Si Quaeris Peninsulam Amoenam Circumspice, "If you seek a pleasant peninsula, look about you."

2007 MUSKEGON

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WE WANT YOUR NEWS and PICTURES

We want news about you, your colleagues, your firm.

- * What's that special talent you have?
- * Tell us about your trip of a lifetime.
- * Who retired? Who joined your firm?

Send to Mike Walsh at mgwalsh@yahoo.com
Or mgwalsh@famlawcenter.com.

Probate Court offers on-line forms, fee info, and instructions

As promised, **Muskegon County Probate Court** is now online with forms, fee schedules and advice available to attorneys and the public.

The site may be reached at www.co.muskegon.mi.us/. After entering the site, follow this path: County Government, County Departments, Probate Court.

UPCOMING LAW EVENTS

7 November at 5 p.m.: Tour the new Muskegon Fire Station at 5:00 p.m., and then head to Racquets for a Happy Hour. **RSVP to Marcy Sorito: 231-744-6218 or marcy-sorito@comcast.net.**

7 December: Annual Christmas Party—Muskegon Country Club. MCBA member **ROY PORTENGA** and his band, Karton Goodman, will entertain.

11 December 2007: Honorable David W. McKeague, "**State of the Sixth Circuit: A View from the Bench.**" **Federal Bar Association Lunch Program**, in the Jury Assembly Room in the Federal Courthouse in Grand Rapids. To order lunch, please contact Wanda Taylor at 616-336-1028 or wtaylor@dickinsonwright.com.

LAW COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

William R. Sininger, Attorney at Law, PLLC, has relocated its offices to 1042 Terrace, Suite B, Muskegon, Michigan 49442. The phone number and E-mail for the firm remain the same.

Newsletter needs YOUR help

YOUR friends and colleagues want to know what's new — in the law community, in other firms, in others' lives. Please share: Info, pix, ideas:

Mike Walsh mgwalsh@yahoo.com.

Public Defense Issue, Con't

Acknowledging Michigan is hard-pressed for money, Ms. Vandenberg said defense reform will save money in the long-run. Money spent now will result in fewer and shorter prison terms, she said.

Local reaction varied from support for change to the cynical: "Isn't this another way to send our money to Detroit?"

Further information about the issue of public defense is available at mipublicdefense.org.

Pending lawsuit info: aclu.org/crimjustice/



What's YOUR Alma Mater?