

Justice Kelly Offers:

Virtual Tour of Hall of Justice

I have been asked to say a few words to you this afternoon by way of update about the Michigan Hall of Justice in Lansing.

I know that nearly all of you have seen it by now and been in it and, in a sense, helped us christen it. So, my remarks will be brief and are intended to further interest you in and inform you about this magnificent building.

One hundred twenty-three years ago, the state capitol building cost \$1,500,000 and was completed six years after the cornerstone was laid. The Hall of Justice took fewer than two years to complete and cost \$88 million. As you know, it was built on time and within budget by the Christman Company and Douglas Steel Fabricating Corporation.



Justice Marilyn Kelly

For the first time in the state's modern history, finally, the judiciary has a building that symbolizes the third branch of government. It has a structure, state-owned, that will house the Supreme Court, its clerk and its entire administrative staff, as well as its library, a conference center and a learning center. The building comprises, also, the Court of Appeals Lansing courtroom, chambers for twelve Court of Appeals judges and their staff and library. Underground, there's a four hundred and sixty car garage for staff and visitors.

Interestingly, you've noticed, the building is curved inward, facing the capitol. The curved exterior emphasizes the fact that the Hall of Justice completes and closes the long rectangle of Legislative and Executive branch government buildings that run between Capital Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. Therefore, if you stand near the Treasury Building facing East, you see the renaissance revival-style state capitol. And if you turn to face the West, you find the new Hall of Justice.

Here is a photo taken during construction viewed from the doorway of the Supreme Court courtroom on the 6th floor looking out through the atrium windows with the capitol in the distance.

In a sense, this Hall of Justice has been on the drawing boards since at least 1922, when Harland Bartholomew made this design. Bartholomew was a nationally acclaimed city planner who predicted that the Michigan capitol building would not always be adequate to house Michigan government. He recommended building a new facility

stretching to the west of the capitol between Ottawa and Allegan streets, including a beautiful capitol mall with a majestic west anchor.

Now, finally, we have it. Today, true to Bartholomew's vision, lies that anchor, the new Hall of Justice. In order to meld architecturally with the capitol, it is limestone-clad with a dome. But whereas the capitol has five stories and is 120,000 square feet, the Hall of Justice is six stories and 270, 000 square feet.

Its design, of course, is modernized from Bartholomew's eighty-year-old vision. The main entrance is marked by a pair of huge Tuscan order columns that provide a focal point for the outside plaza. Above the front entrance, the principal elevation is capped by a shallow glass dome over the Supreme Court lobby. As the architect describes it, "This hemispherical glass dome provides a contemporary contrast to the elongated, mannerist dome of the State Capitol." Viewed here from the inside, it consists of more than eighty panels of insulated glass. As Madame de Stael observed so long ago, architecture can be "frozen music."

Notice this view of a typical window. It suggests columns adjacent to the glass worked into the limestone. The great seal of the State of Michigan lies under the dome, directly on axis with the capitol building.

You may agree with me that the building's designers, Albert Kahn & Assoc and Spillis, Candela & Partners deserve our gratitude for these graceful and appropriate architectural connections with the state capitol building and its restrained neoclassical language. They intended it to provide a distinctly permanent and durable image for the Michigan judicial system in this age of fleeting impressions and momentary pleasures.

One part of the building, you will recall, is the Learning Center on the first floor. This part particularly thrills me as a former teacher. The Michigan Historical Society has my appreciation for its continuing role in supporting the Center. In the past, there was nothing like it. Those interested in seeing something of the judicial branch could visit our Supreme Court courtroom in the Williams Building, hear a lecture and ask questions, but could rarely see the Court in action. Now, thru modern technology, in the Learning Center, visitors will hear and see films introducing them to the judicial branch and to its building. They now view actual footage of oral argument in the Supreme Court. They visit hands-on displays that assist them in learning about basic legal concepts such as search and seizure. Does the principal have a right to search your locker? Open the locker and find out. Due process, civil rights, and employment law are introduced. What was the Battle of the Overpass? Visitors learn a little about criminal law. What happens when you are issued a traffic ticket? Push the button under the right answer and you'll find out. What is the role of the prosecuting attorney? How does a case proceed through the appellate division? And did you know that American Indians have their own laws, have a sovereign nation, right here in Michigan?

Already, 6319 people have visited the Hall of Justice Learning Center since it opened on November 1, 2002. Admission is free. Also, there will be distance learning classes

and workshops for teachers who cannot bring their students to Lansing because of cost or distance restrictions.

So, there it is, a magnificent new building that makes us proud to be part of the legal system in Michigan, that symbolize our dedication to Truth and Justice.

As I see it, the challenge for the Supreme Court, now, is to ensure that truth and justice are brought into the Hall of Justice every day it is in existence. That includes not only the content of the Court's decisions on the cases that come before it, but the content of its administrative decisions.

As Sir Winston Churchill one said, "We shape our buildings, and forever after, they shape our feelings and thoughts."