



# Society Update

The Official Publication of the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society

Spring 2024

## “Backwards and in Heels”<sup>1</sup>

## Women on the Michigan Supreme Court

Over its 200-plus year history, the Michigan Supreme Court has had over 125 justices. You can read more about each on the Society website, or in our published *Reference Guide*.

However, this newsletter will focus on the fourteen unique women who’ve served on the Court, beginning with Mary Stallings Coleman who was elected to the Court over fifty years ago.

Justice Coleman was born in 1914 – five years before the 19th amendment was ratified – and graduated from law school in 1939, when there were less than 5,000 female attorneys in the entire country.<sup>2</sup> She lived through two world wars – even following her husband to occupied Germany during his service as “chief of the legislative branch for military government”<sup>3</sup> – and saw men walk on the moon. When she ran for the office of state supreme court justice in 1972, at least one newspaper highlighted her appearance first – “...in her 50s, still beautiful and looking far younger...” – considered her intellect and professional accomplishments second.<sup>4</sup> Seven years after her history-making election, she made history again when her colleagues elected her chief justice; you can see a group photo on page 2.

Justice Coleman was also unique amongst the group of fourteen in that she was the only woman on the Court for the vast majority of her tenure, except for around two weeks when Dorothy Comstock Riley (pages 4 - 5) was appointed. Only Patricia Boyle (page 6) served as the lone female on the Court, but it was not even two years (less than an eighth of her tenure) before she was joined once again by Dorothy Riley.

By 1985, it was not only common to have a woman on the Court, but even more than one. In 1997, a quarter

of a century after Coleman’s successful election, Elizabeth Weaver (page 7) and Marilyn Kelly (pages 8 - 9) joined the Court to form the first female majority, which you can see on page 5. Maura Corrigan (pages 10 - 11) joined two years later.

By the time Mary Stallings Coleman died in 2001, her legacy on the Michigan Supreme Court was secure as was the leadership role of women on the Court, to which Chief Justices Riley, Weaver, and Corrigan could attest (Marilyn Kelly was elected Chief Justice in the years after Coleman’s death).

In the following pages, you’ll find some key facts about each of our female justices, from the first to the most recent, all of whom made history “dancing backwards and in high heels.”

### ENDNOTES

1. This famous quote is in reference to Ginger Rogers, the dance partner of Fred Astaire: “Ginger Rogers did everything Fred Astaire did but backwards and in high heels.”

2. Hylton, “Adams’ Rib as an Historical Document: The Plight of Women Lawyers in the 1940s,” <<https://law.marquette.edu/facultyblog/2013/06/adams-rib-as-historical-document/#:~:text=In%201940%2C%20there%20were%20only,only%202.4%25%20of%20all%20lawyers.>> (Accessed January 16, 2024).

3. *Visitor in Marshall Tells of Evacuation: Americans Leaving Berlin for U.S. Zone*, The Battle Creek Enquirer and News (June 13, 1948), p 15.

4. Kirk, *Russell Kirk Says: A Woman Justice On Supreme Court*, The Indianapolis Star (November 4, 1972), p 22.

## Chronological

**Mary Coleman** (1973 – 1982)(Chief Justice 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982)

**Dorothy Comstock Riley** (1982 – 1983, 1985 – 1997)(Chief Justice 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991)

**Patricia Boyle** (1983 – 1998)

**Elizabeth Weaver** (1995 – 2010)(Chief Justice 1999, 2000)

**Marilyn Kelly** (1997 – 2012)(Chief Justice 2009, 2010)

**Maura Corrigan** (1999 – 2011)(Chief Justice 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004)

**Diane Hathaway** (2009 – 2013)

**Mary Beth Kelly** (2011 – 2015)

**Bridget McCormack** (2013 – 2022)(Chief Justice 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022)

**Joan Larsen** (2015 – 2017)

**Elizabeth Clement** (2017 – current)(Chief Justice 2022, 2023)

**Megan Cavanagh** (2019 – current)

**Elizabeth Welch** (2021 – current)

**Kyra Harris Bolden** (2023 – current)

## Alphabetical

**Kyra Harris Bolden** (2023 – current)

**Patricia Boyle** (1983 – 1998)

**Megan Cavanagh** (2019 – current)

**Elizabeth Clement** (2017 – current)(Chief Justice 2022, 2023)

**Mary Coleman** (1973 – 1982)(Chief Justice 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982)

**Maura Corrigan** (1999 – 2011)(Chief Justice 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004)

**Diane Hathaway** (2009 – 2013)

**Marilyn Kelly** (1997 – 2012)(Chief Justice 2009, 2010)

**Mary Beth Kelly** (2011 – 2015)

**Joan Larsen** (2015 – 2017)

**Bridget McCormack** (2013 – 2022)(Chief Justice 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022)

**Dorothy Comstock Riley** (1982 – 1983, 1985 – 1997)(Chief Justice 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991)

**Elizabeth Weaver** (1995 – 2010)(Chief Justice 1999, 2000)

**Elizabeth Welch** (2021 – current)



Chief Justice Mary Stallings Coleman and Her Court.



# Mary Leslie Stallings Coleman

**BORN:** June 24, 1914, in Forney, Texas

**EDUCATION:** University of Maryland (BA 1935); George Washington University (JD 1939)

**RESIDENCE/POLITICAL PARTY NOMINATION:** Battle Creek, Michigan/Republican

**JOINED SUPREME COURT:** January 1, 1973, elected

**CHIEF JUSTICE:** 1979-1982

**LEFT COURT:** December 24, 1982, retired

**PREDECESSOR:** Paul L. Adams

**SUCCESSOR:** James H. Brickley

**DIED:** November 27, 2001, in Ocala, Florida

## **ELECTORAL HISTORY:**

11/7/1972 Elected to full term ending Jan. 1, 1981

11/4/1980 Elected to full term ending Jan. 1, 1989

## **OTHER PROFESSIONAL CAREER:**

Private practice, Marshall, Michigan

Judge, Calhoun County Probate Court (1961-1973)



## **PERSONAL:**

Justice Coleman married Creighton R. Coleman on June 24, 1939, and had two daughters, Leslie and Carol.



Justice Coleman's official portrait hangs in the foyer of the Supreme Court courtroom. An unofficial portrait hangs in Chief Justice Clement's office. The portrait was presented to the Court on December 6, 1984.



Justice Coleman and Justice Boyle at a later Historical Society Luncheon.

# Save the Date -

**Thursday,  
April 11, 2024**

Society Annual Luncheon at the  
Inn at St. John's, Plymouth

**Wednesday,  
June 12, 2024**

Justice Alton Davis portrait un-  
veiling\*

**Wednesday,  
October 9, 2024**

Opening Session for the 2024-  
2025 Court Year

\* Invitation only

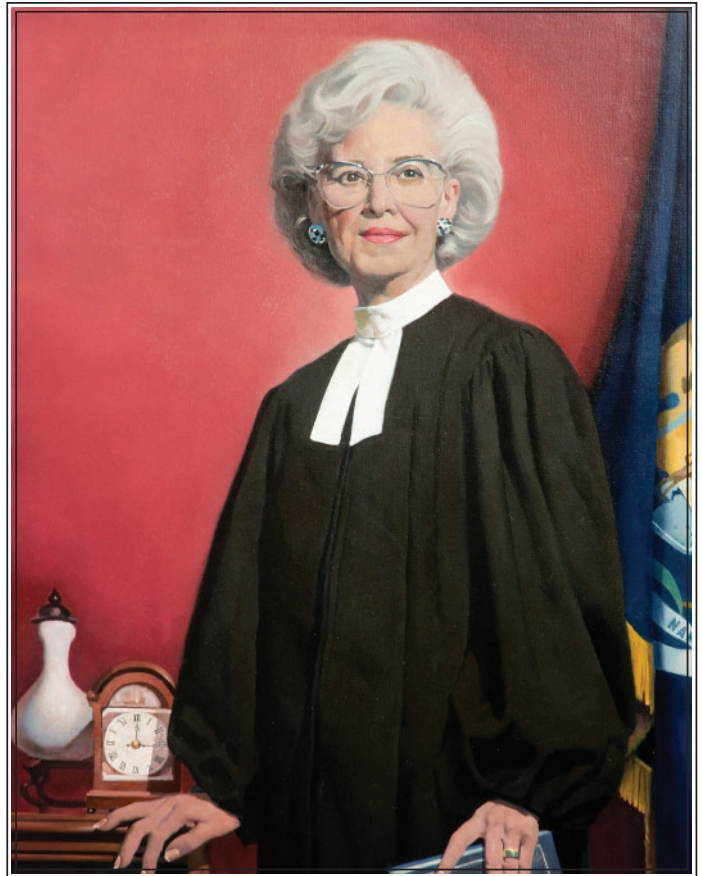
**For Questions and Comments  
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Justice Riley's official Court portrait was presented to the Court on October 7, 1997, a little more than a month after her retirement.



Justice Riley, shortly before her retirement. She was succeeded by Justice Clifford Taylor.





The first female majority on the Court consisted of Justice Patricia Boyle, Justice Elizabeth Weaver, Justice Marilyn Kelly, and Justice Dorothy Riley.

## Dorothy Ruth Comstock Riley

**BORN:** December 6, 1924, in Detroit, Michigan

**EDUCATION:** Wayne [State] University (BA 1946, LLB 1949)

**RESIDENCE/POLITICAL PARTY NOMINATION:** Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan/Republican

**JOINED SUPREME COURT:** December 9, 1982, appointed by Governor William G. Milliken

**LEFT COURT:** February 16, 1983

**PREDECESSOR:** Blair Moody Jr.

**SUCCESSOR:** Patricia J. Boyle

**REJOINED SUPREME COURT:** January 1, 1985, elected

**CHIEF JUSTICE:** 1987-1990

**LEFT COURT:** September 1, 1997, retired

**PREDECESSOR:** Thomas G. Kavanagh

**SUCCESSOR:** Clifford W. Taylor

**DIED:** October 23, 2004, in Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan

### ELECTORAL HISTORY:

11/2/1982 Elected to full term ending Jan. 1, 1991

11/6/1984 Elected to full term ending Jan. 1, 1993

11/3/1992 Elected to full term ending Jan. 1, 2001

### OTHER PROFESSIONAL CAREER:

Private practice, Detroit, Michigan

Assistant Friend of the Court, Wayne County

Judge, Circuit Court for the Third Circuit (Wayne County) (1972-1976)

Judge, Michigan Court of Appeals (1976-1982)

### PERSONAL:

Justice Riley married Wallace Riley and had one son, Peter.



Justice Boyle's official portrait, which was presented to the Court on November 1, 2001, when her successor to the Court, Maura Corrigan, was serving as Chief Justice.

## Patricia Jean E. Pernick Boyle

**BORN:** March 31, 1937, in Detroit, Michigan

**EDUCATION:** Wayne State University (BA and JD 1963)

**RESIDENCE/POLITICAL PARTY NOMINATION:**  
Detroit, Michigan/Democrat

**JOINED SUPREME COURT:** April 20, 1983, appointed by Governor James Blanchard

**LEFT COURT:** January 1, 1999, retired

**PREDECESSOR:** Dorothy Comstock Riley

**SUCCESSOR:** Maura D. Corrigan

**DIED:** January 13, 2014, in Florida

### ELECTORAL HISTORY:

11/6/1984      Elected to remainder of Riley term

11/6/1990      Elected to full term ending Jan. 1, 1999

### OTHER PROFESSIONAL CAREER:

Law Clerk to Thaddeus Machrowicz, U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Michigan (1964-1965)

Assistant U.S. Attorney, Eastern District of Michigan (1965-1970)

Director of Research Training and Appeals, Wayne County Prosecutor's Office (1970-1976)

Judge, Detroit Recorder's Court (1976-1978)

Judge, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan (1978-1983)

### PERSONAL:

Justice Boyle was married to Nathan Pernick with whom she had four children: Jeffery, Jason, Kurt, and David. She later married Terrance Boyle.



Justice Boyle with Justice Marilyn Kelly in the background at Justice Taylor's investiture in 1997 in the Old Courtroom.





Justice Weaver's official Court portrait is located on the 4th floor of the Hall of Justice.



Justice Weaver at Justice Levin's portrait unveiling.

## Elizabeth Ann Weaver

**BORN:** March 28, 1941, in New Orleans, Louisiana

**EDUCATION:** H. Sophie Newcomb Memorial College (Tulane University)(BA 1962); Tulane University (JD 1965)

**RESIDENCE/POLITICAL PARTY NOMINATION:** Glen Arbor, Michigan/Republican

**JOINED SUPREME COURT:** January 1, 1995, elected

**CHIEF JUSTICE:** 1999-2000

**LEFT COURT:** August 26, 2010, resigned/retired

**PREDECESSOR:** Robert P. Griffin

**SUCCESSOR:** Alton Davis

**DIED:** April 21, 2015

### **ELECTORAL HISTORY:**

11/8/1994      Elected to full term ending Jan. 1, 2003

11/5/2002      Elected to full term ending Jan. 1, 2011

### **OTHER PROFESSIONAL CAREER:**

Private practice, New Orleans, Louisiana, and Leelanau County, Michigan

Attorney/Title Specialist, Chevron Oil Company

Judge, Leelanau County Probate Juvenile Court (1974-1987)

Judge, Michigan Court of Appeals (1987-1995)

Exactly half of the fourteen female justices have also served as Chief Justices:

**Mary Leslie Stallings Coleman**

**Dorothy Ruth Comstock Riley**

**Elizabeth Ann Weaver**

**Maura Denise Corrigan**

**Marilyn Jean Kelly**

**Bridget Mary McCormack**

**Elizabeth Tripp Clement**



# Marilyn Jean Kelly

## EDUCATION:

Eastern Michigan University (BA 1960); Middlebury College (MA 1961); Wayne State University (JD 1971)

## RESIDENCE/POLITICAL PARTY NOMINATION:

Bloomfield Hills, Michigan/Democrat

**JOINED SUPREME COURT:** January 1, 1997, elected

**CHIEF JUSTICE:** 2009-2010

**LEFT COURT:** January 1, 2013, retired

**PREDECESSOR:** Charles L. Levin

**SUCCESSOR:** Bridget M. McCormack

## ELECTORAL HISTORY:

11/5/1996 Elected to full term ending Jan. 1, 2005

11/2/2004 Elected to full term ending Jan. 1, 2013

## OTHER PROFESSIONAL CAREER:

Private practice, Oakland County, Michigan

Judge, Michigan Court of Appeals (1989-1996)



Justice Kelly on the Board of Education in 1967 when she was serving as the Board vice president and the only woman.

(credit: [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marilyn\\_Jean\\_Kelly\\_1967.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marilyn_Jean_Kelly_1967.png))

## From the Board of Education to the State Supreme Court, Or A Meeting of the Superficially Dissimilar

*by Justice Marilyn Kelly (ret'd)*

In all probability, I am the only former justice of the Michigan Supreme Court who entered the legal profession as a direct result of election to the State Board of Education. My professional life has evolved with curious frequency from a meeting of the superficially dissimilar; in this case, the administration of the public schools and the practice of law.

In 1965, Michigan began the implementation of a new state constitution. Not surprisingly, questions arose concerning the meaning being given to certain of its provisions. Among them were those enumerating the duties of the new State Board of Education. I was newly elected to that board and, at the age of twenty-six, found myself, a teacher, knee-deep in lawyers. The "Eternal General" Frank Kelley (no relation) represented me and the other board members. During the many hours his assistants briefed us on the fine points of constitutional and administrative law, I was stimulated by

the law, by its relevance to the world around me, and its importance to our democracy. I determined to abandon a doctorate in French language and literature and go to law school.

I applied only to Wayne State University. My single other interest was the University of Michigan until I learned its admissions office discouraged applicants unable to attend full time. By comparison, Wayne State was welcoming. There, night school was an immersion in focused, hard-working individuals most of whom already knew how they planned to use their law degrees. Many of us, myself included, were the first in our family to go to college, were married, and had full-time jobs. The top student in our class, Helen O. Petrauskas, was a chemist and a mother. In 1983, she became a vice president at the Ford Motor Company, its first female V.P. The remaining four women in our class were equally successful in their education and most went on to good legal careers. Two, Vesta Svensen and I, eventually were elected to the Michigan bench.

I believe that both the faculty and our fellow students at Wayne treated us with respect and made us feel welcome.



We did not experience that same treatment on entering the practice of law. It was the early 1970s and there were few women lawyers, even fewer women partners in law firms, and still fewer women judges. One male lawyer turned down my job application saying I lacked the “big fists” necessary to win litigation cases and that he would never be able to give me work because his clients felt underrepresented by a woman lawyer. One male judge, in open court, asked me how I wished to be referred to and, in the presence of my client, was strident and dismissive in his refusal to call me “Ms.”

I practiced law for seventeen years before I ran for judge. Notwithstanding the struggle, I enjoyed it and have many fond memories of the work and of a good number of attorneys and judges I came in contact with during those years. In time I realized that the job of appellate judging better meshed with my personal strengths and disposition. Even so, I might never have made the change had the decision depended on there being then a substantial number of woman judges after whom to pattern myself.

What made my run for the court possible? Firstly, I was aided by a boost in self-confidence built on my years of courtroom practice and my volunteer work as a member of the Oakland County Bar Association and the State Bar of Michigan. My career was advanced by the networking and leadership opportunities that the Women’s Bar and Women Lawyers Associations afforded me. Secondly, I was and am forever indebted to one fine judge, Court of Appeals Judge John Shepherd, who singled me out and urged me to seek a seat on the Michigan Court of Appeals.

My eight years on that court were fulfilling and stimulating. Even more stimulating and challenging were my sixteen years on the Michigan Supreme Court. When asked what it was like to be a judge, I think first about what an honor it was and what stellar opportunities sitting as a judge presented. Over those twenty-four years, I worked with many unforgettable individuals, and strong, successful, principled, and inspiring judges. I tried to learn from the best of them. I never tired of the challenge of striving to make the right decision on the cases before me and trying to write decisions in plain unambiguous English, understandable by lawyers and lay people alike.

As I grew in the job of Justice of the Supreme Court

and became Chief Justice, I became immersed in the challenge of identifying the most pressing needs in the justice system and in addressing its worst weaknesses. That, I felt, was as important a goal for the Court as making legally sound decisions on cases and setting good precedent.

I will be pleased if I am remembered for my work in Access to Justice, in creating the office of coordinator of Access to Justice in the Supreme Court and in setting in motion what has become Michigan Legal Help. I am gratified and humbled by the realization that some lawyers in practice today and some who are on the bench may have found my career and my work a model on which to pattern their own successes.



Justice Kelly at her portrait unveiling, nearly sixty years after her election to the State Board of Education.



Justice McCormack at Justice Kelly’s portrait unveiling in 2023.

# Maura Denise Corrigan

**EDUCATION:** Marygrove College (BA 1969); University of Detroit (University of Detroit-Mercy)(JD 1973)

**RESIDENCE/POLITICAL PARTY NOMINATION:**  
Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan/Republican

**JOINED SUPREME COURT:** January 1, 1999, elected

**CHIEF JUSTICE:** 2001-2004

**LEFT COURT:** January 14, 2011, resigned

**PREDECESSOR:** Patricia J. Boyle

**SUCCESSOR:** Brian K. Zahra

## ELECTORAL HISTORY:

11/3/1998 Elected to full term ending Jan. 1, 2007

11/7/2006 Elected to full term ending Jan. 1, 2015

## OTHER PROFESSIONAL CAREER:

Private practice, Detroit, Michigan

Law Clerk, Michigan Court of Appeals (1973-1974)

Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, Wayne County (1974-1979)

Chief of Appeals and Chief Assistant, U.S. Attorney's Office for Eastern District of Michigan (1979-1989)

Judge, Michigan Court of Appeals (1992-1998)

Director, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (2011-2014)

Visiting Fellow, American Enterprise Institute (2014-2016)

Private practice, Butzel Long (2016-2023)



Justice Corrigan in the midst of her journey studying law.

## My Journey to the Study of Law

*by Justice Maura Corrigan (ret'd)*

The Society asked me to reflect on my journey to the study of law. I readily agreed to do so, yet I must confess this trip down memory lane plumbs ancient history! I enrolled in law school in Fall 1969, more than 54 years ago. In 2023, my class celebrated the fiftieth



Justice Corrigan with several of her siblings (and her parents) at her graduation from Marygrove College in 1969.



anniversary of our 1973 graduation from the University of Detroit School of Law. I am grateful for every day of my career as a lawyer. And I am still amazed and honored that I was appointed and then elected to serve on the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court of Michigan.

Unlike many of my colleagues, I did not have a lifelong dream of becoming a lawyer. I'm a baby boomer. I was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1948, the eldest daughter of Peter and Mae Corrigan. I have five sisters and one brother. My father was a physician, and my mother was a nurse. They valued education and expected us to do our very best. I am the granddaughter of Irish immigrants and the first woman on both sides of the family to graduate from college.

I was a good student and an avid reader. As a child, I devoured Nancy Drew mysteries. I wanted to follow in her footsteps and become a sleuth! As a teenager, I worked in my father's medical office and thoroughly enjoyed it. My father had a firm view on the appropriate jobs for women: teaching, nursing, or social work. He once told me that I might aspire to become a physician, but he would never vote to admit me to medical school because I would take up a man's seat. Needless to say, his opinion was discouraging and disheartening.

When I enrolled in college in 1965, I had no firm ideas

about a career path. I attended Marygrove College in northwest Detroit, a small but excellent Catholic women's college. After changing majors several times, I settled on sociology. By my senior year, I thought I would become a social worker. We were required to have a field work placement as a part of the sociology major. I was assigned to the Probation Department at Detroit Recorder's Court, the criminal court serving the city. I encountered prosecutors and criminal defense lawyers in various court proceedings. I especially recall Justin Ravitz and Ken Cockrel as they appeared on behalf of their clients in many courtrooms. I was impressed! And I thought I could do the work of representing clients and might prefer it over social work. But I was uncertain.

I was on the fence between obtaining a master's in social work and a law degree. I decided to apply to the University of Detroit-Mercy (then known as the University of Detroit). They had an urban law clinic, which intrigued me. I thought I could learn to represent clients in that setting. I was admitted to the law school for Fall semester, 1969 and became a member of the Class of 1973. I have no regrets and have never looked back.

I found the first year of law school daunting. I attended night classes and worked as a probation officer during the day. Our night class had approximately 70 students. During the first week, six women were enrolled. I believe only three women graduated in my class, so only

a handful studied law during those years. My male colleagues were tremendously supportive, as were the vast majority of professors. Two notable exceptions: an adjunct professor of criminal law singled out women to recite on the rape cases, while a professor of federal jurisdiction held "Ladies Day" during which only women students were called on. These episodes did not faze me. I was determined to succeed. I had a wonderful time in law school. I was elected student bar president and was the first woman admitted nationally to Phi Alpha Delta Law Fraternity. The professors and students who supported their women colleagues far outnumbered the naysayers. I am grateful to the University of Detroit-Mercy School of Law, and proud to belong to the Class of 1973.



Justice Corrigan with several of her siblings at her portrait unveiling nearly fifty years after law school graduation.



## Diane Marie Hathaway

### EDUCATION:

Henry Ford School of Radiologic Technology (Certificate 1974); Wayne State University; Madonna College (BS 1984); Detroit College of Law (JD 1987)

### RESIDENCE/POLITICAL PARTY NOMINATION:

Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan/Democrat

**JOINED SUPREME COURT:** January 1, 2009, elected

**LEFT COURT:** January 21, 2013, resigned

**PREDECESSOR:** Clifford W. Taylor

**SUCCESSOR:** David Viviano

### ELECTORAL HISTORY:

11/4/2008 Elected to full term ending Jan. 1, 2017

### OTHER PROFESSIONAL CAREER:

Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, Macomb County

Judge, Circuit Court for the Third Circuit (Wayne County) (1993-2008)



Justice Hathaway at the Historical Society luncheon in 2010.

## Mary Beth Kelly

### EDUCATION:

University of Michigan at Dearborn (BA); University of Notre Dame (JD)

### RESIDENCE/POLITICAL PARTY NOMINATION:

Grosse Ile, Michigan/Republican

**JOINED SUPREME COURT:** January 1, 2011, elected

**LEFT COURT:** October 1, 2015, resigned

**PREDECESSOR:** Alton Thomas Davis

**SUCCESSOR:** Joan Larsen

### ELECTORAL HISTORY:

11/5/2010 Elected to full term ending Jan. 1, 2019

### OTHER PROFESSIONAL CAREER:

Private practice, Detroit, Michigan

Judge, Circuit Court for the Third Circuit (Wayne County) (1999-2010, 2020-current)



Justice Kelly at the Historical Society luncheon in 2016.

Did you know that the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society was founded by our second female justice, Dorothy Comstock Riley during her term as Chief Justice?

## Bridget Mary McCormack

### EDUCATION:

Trinity College, Connecticut (BA 1988); New York University Law School (JD 1991)

### RESIDENCE/POLITICAL PARTY NOMINATION:

Ann Arbor, Michigan/Democrat

**JOINED SUPREME COURT:** January 1, 2013, elected

**LEFT COURT:** January 1, 2023, resigned

**PREDECESSOR:** Marilyn J. Kelly

**SUCCESSOR:** Kyra Harris Bolden

### ELECTORAL HISTORY:

11/6/2012 Elected to full term ending Jan. 1, 2021

11/3/2020 Elected to full time ending Jan. 1, 2029

### OTHER PROFESSIONAL CAREER:

Legal Aid Society (1991-1994)

Attorney, Office of the Appellate Defender, New York (1994-1995)

Faculty Fellow, Yale Law School (1996-1998)

Faculty, University of Michigan Law School (1998-2012)

President/CEO, American Arbitration Association (2023-current)



Justice McCormack at Justice Kelly's portrait unveiling, shortly before the former left the Court.

## Joan Louise Larsen

**EDUCATION:** University of Northern Iowa (B.A.); Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law (J.D. 1993)

**JOINED SUPREME COURT:** October 1, 2015, appointed by Governor Rick Snyder

**LEFT COURT:** November 2, 2017, appointed by President Trump to United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit

**PREDECESSOR:** Mary Beth Kelly

**SUCCESSOR:** Elizabeth T. Clement

### ELECTORAL HISTORY:

2016 Elected to a partial term ending January 1, 2019

### OTHER PROFESSIONAL CAREER:

University of Michigan professor

Deputy Assistant Attorney General



Justice Larsen addressing the Historical Society luncheon attendees in 2016, reminiscing on her experience clerking for U.S. Supreme Court Justice Scalia.



6th Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Larsen addressing the Society luncheon in 2023.

# The Current Female Majority on the Court



## Elizabeth Tripp Clement

**EDUCATION:** Michigan State University (B.A. 1999); Michigan State University College of Law (J.D. 2002)

**RESIDENCE:** East Lansing, Michigan

**JOINED SUPREME COURT:** November 17, 2017, appointed by Governor Rick Snyder

**CHIEF JUSTICE:** November 22, 2022 – Current

**PREDECESSOR:** Joan Larsen

**ELECTORAL HISTORY:**

2018 Elected to a full term ending January 1, 2027

**OTHER PROFESSIONAL CAREER:**

Private practice

Legislative aide

Policy advisor and legal counsel

Gubernatorial deputy legal counsel

Gubernatorial deputy chief of staff/cabinet secretary

Gubernatorial chief legal counsel



Chief Justice Clement addressing the 2023 Luncheon attendees.



## Megan Kathleen Cavanagh

**EDUCATION:** University of Michigan (B.S. (Engineering) 1993); Wayne State University Law School (J.D. 2000)

**RESIDENCE:** Troy, Michigan

**JOINED SUPREME COURT:** January 1, 2019

**PREDECESSOR:** Kurtis T. Wilder

**ELECTORAL HISTORY:**

2018 Elected to a full term ending January 1, 2027

**OTHER PROFESSIONAL CAREER:**

Engineering

Private practice



Justice Cavanagh and her father, Former Justice Michael Cavanagh, at a recent event.





## Elizabeth M. Welch

**EDUCATION:** Pennsylvania State University (B.A. 1992); Ohio State University Moritz College of Law (J.D. 1995)

**RESIDENCE:** East Grand Rapids, Michigan

**JOINED SUPREME COURT:** January 1, 2021, elected

**PREDECESSOR:** Stephen Markman

**ELECTORAL HISTORY:**

2020 Elected to a full term ending January 1, 2029.

**OTHER PROFESSIONAL CAREER:**

Private practice



## Kyra Harris Bolden

**EDUCATION:** Grand Valley State University (B.A. 2010); University of Detroit Mercy School of Law (J.D. 2014)

**JOINED SUPREME COURT:** January 1, 2023, appointed by Governor Gretchen Whitmer to a term ending January 1, 2025.

**PREDECESSOR:** Bridget Mary McCormack

**OTHER PROFESSIONAL CAREER:**

Private practice

Legislator representing 35th House District



Six female justices in one picture: Justice Kyra Harris Bolden, Chief Justice Elizabeth T. Clement, Justice Megan K. Cavanagh, Justice Marilyn Kelly, Justice Bridget M. McCormack, and Justice Elizabeth M. Welch at Justice Kelly's portrait unveiling.

# Excellence through Education: The Michigan Judicial Institute

*By Rachael Drenovsky and John Nizol*

“Every now and then someone comes up with an idea which is so direct and simple that people wonder why it never surfaced before.

The Michigan Supreme Court has done just that. It has established a school designed to provide continuing legal and administrative education for the state’s 537 judges and their staffs.

...The general public stands to benefit most from this continuing education program, something that is worth applauding. ...

All that can be added is to repeat: Why didn’t someone think of this before?”<sup>1</sup>

In 1977, the Michigan Supreme Court (MSC) created the Michigan Judicial Institute (MJi) to offer professional development for judges, administrators, and all other court employees. From its outset, MJi’s mission has been to respond to the continuing education needs of the moment and anticipate training for new and challenging developments in the legal profession. The Court foresaw that MJi would not only develop and enhance the skills of judges and judicial branch employees but would also engender public confidence in those “who assume the public trust of justice service.”<sup>2</sup>

## **The Movement Towards Judicial Education**

The nascent concept of judicial education developed during a time of significant administrative change for Michigan’s courts. The State Court Administrative Office (SCAO), created by Public Act 269 of 1952, was a mechanism for reform from its inception. SCAO’s role was to study and recommend administrative improvements, prepare and administer the state judicial budget, and study and recommend judicial resources. A decade later, approval of the 1963 Constitution further

reshaped the state’s judicial branch.<sup>3</sup>

In conjunction with these developments, Michigan’s courts – like those across the country – faced larger dockets. The cultural shifts of the 1960s and 1970s brought new causes of action, such as civil rights actions, class action lawsuits, environmental litigation, and consumer complaints. Moreover, crime rates and public anxiety over crime rose steadily into the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>4</sup>

To help ameliorate these concerns and promote best practices, the MSC and SCAO began holding educational sessions on substantive, procedural, and administrative topics. Judges attended regional seminars and annual judicial conferences. Juvenile workers received certification through the Juvenile Court Training Program.<sup>5</sup>

Based on success in these areas, the Court convened a three-day judicial training seminar specifically for new judges in December of 1966. Numerous judicial seats had opened due to the Constitution’s retirement clause, and the Court realized these new judges would need a



theoretical base as well as “practical answers to practical problems[.]” Sessions covered civil and criminal matters, especially recent trends resulting from U.S. Supreme Court decisions such as *Gideon v Wainright*, *Miranda v Arizona*, and *Mapp v Ohio*.<sup>6</sup>

State Court Administrator William R. Hart commented to participants:

Assuming that each of you spend 20 years on the bench, this means as a group you will contribute 720 years to the administration of justice in Michigan. Contemplate for a moment, if you will, what effect – either good or bad – you will have in Michigan in the years to come.<sup>7</sup>

Soon thereafter, new federal funding sources accelerated judicial education efforts. The Kerner Commission report – a presidential study which identified significant racial inequities as the origin of violent uprisings in Detroit, Newark, and other cities in 1967 – called for massive government spending in economics, housing, and the justice system to counteract this imbalance. The Law Enforcement Assistance Administration

(LEAA) became the conduit for grants to federal, state, and local programs that controlled crime and improved court processes. By 1981, at least 33 states used this funding to establish continuing judicial education divisions headed by professional staffs.<sup>8</sup>

### The Early Years of MJJ

Utilizing a blend of LEAA grants and state general funds, the MSC announced the formation of the Michigan Judicial Institute in October of 1977. Justice James L. Ryan, who served as MJJ’s supervising justice and media champion, viewed the project from the perspective of a former trial court judge, adjunct law professor, and faculty member for the National Judicial College (NJC).<sup>9</sup> In MJJ’s early years, Justice Ryan helped design the curriculum and recruit presenters, and he later returned as faculty after his appointment to the federal Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. In an oral history interview, Justice Ryan reflected on his efforts. “I loved that kind of work,” he said, proudly describing MJJ’s success and the positive reputation it enjoyed among the state’s judges.<sup>10</sup>

Dennis Catlin became MJJ’s founding director, leading a staff of nine. A former Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agent, Catlin had supervised planning of statewide Michigan Law Enforcement Training Council (MLETC) programs before joining SCAO. Entering the field of judicial education in its early days, Catlin brought MJJ into the national scene by writing journal articles, cofounding the National Association of State Judicial Educators (NASJE), and establishing the national Judicial Education Reference, Information and Technical Transfer Project (JERITT) through the State Justice Institute (SJI).<sup>11</sup>

Arthur L. “Swede” Olson, who had been an assistant project director at SCAO, was named assistant director of MJJ. In his former role, Olson managed trainings for juvenile service workers in cooperation with executive branch agencies, universities, and other organizations. He also brought experience as a director of juvenile courts in Barry and Ottawa counties.<sup>12</sup>

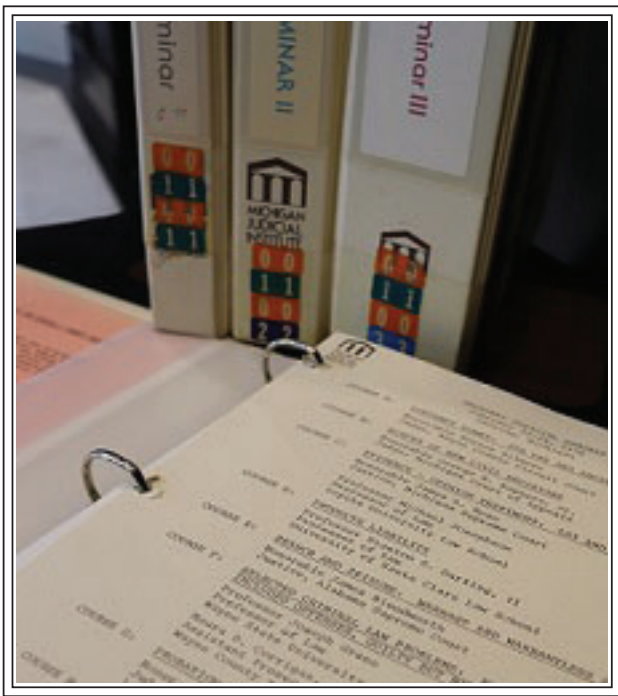
Early in 1977, MJJ staff conducted a thorough education needs assessment of more than 7,000 judges and court staff. This survey resulted in a robust template of programs with relevance for years to come.<sup>13</sup>

Although most states’ full-time continuing education



Justice James L. Ryan





programs were mandatory, Michigan took a voluntary approach. Education was viewed as a positive way to introduce change and bringing continuing education under the auspices of the Court encouraged judges and staff to attend. This was seen as a necessary change since previous workshops for judges held with outside law faculty attracted only moderate attendance.<sup>14</sup>

MJI's first fiscal year included a full complement of lectures, workshops, and seminars. Four multi-day regional seminars in Detroit, Lansing, Kalamazoo, and Gaylord featured sessions on criminal, civil, and constitutional law, and topics such as evidence, probation, sentencing, and search and seizure. A mix of law professors, federal judges, and state court judges served as faculty. Other judicial seminars focused on the new Proposed Michigan Rules of Evidence, Mental Health Code, child abuse and neglect, and caseload management. By the end of MJI's first 12 months, news media reported that 75 % of the state's judges had attended at least one program.<sup>15</sup>

On a biennial basis, newly elected or appointed judges attended a weeklong orientation in early January. The program was based "on the idea that judges are made, not born, that judicial wisdom does not automatically flow forth when one dons a black robe and begins wielding a gavel." The orientation also dealt with day-to-day court operation "offering the kind of nitty gritty knowledge that often is gained only by trial and error

and long, hard experience." Topics included civil, criminal, and constitutional law; case flow management; and ethics and demeanor.<sup>16</sup>

News coverage of these seminars was welcomed although reporters sometimes focused on quirkier aspects. A *Detroit Free Press* headline proclaimed judges were "taught to stay awake," but the article revealed sessions that featured commonsense information, supported by citations and camaraderie.<sup>17</sup> The *Grand Rapids Press* highlighted "Ten Commandments for the New Judge," which included "Be kind, patient, and dignified," and "there are no unimportant cases."<sup>18</sup>

Continuing judicial education and judicial career development also formed important parts of the curriculum. In addition to the long-established regional seminars, specialty seminars became a means of responding to major changes, such as the decriminalization of the traffic code in 1979 when most violations became civil infractions. Additionally, multi-day "residence" seminars offered opportunities for judges to study topics such as evidence or opinion writing in depth, and chief judges became better versed in duties related to personnel, caseload management, financial management, and the cultivation of relationships with funding units, the community, and their benchmates.<sup>19</sup>

When government budgets suffered in the early 1980s, MJI used novel methods of reaching judges. For example, in an era before mobile phones, web cameras, or the internet, MJI hosted a series of seminars through telephone conference calls. Despite long-distance charges and the need for additional equipment such as an amplifier, loudspeaker, and push-bar microphone in each location, the calls eliminated the costs of travel, lodging, and conference room rentals. One such conference call included Professor Charles H. Whitebread, an expert on constitutional criminal law and procedure at the University of Southern California, and members of the judiciary, including Justice Mary S. Coleman and Justice James L. Ryan. Whitebread joined from Los Angeles, while other faculty spoke from their offices in Detroit, Farmington, Flint, and Lansing. About 100 trial court judges were on the line, grouped around phone equipment in courts in all corners of the state. One participant described the experience as "amazing" and a "tremendous cost savings."<sup>20</sup>

MJI also created programs for court staff. From the be-



Three awards that MJJ has received. Back left is the National Association for Court Management 1998 Justice Achievement Award. Back right is the Michigan Court Support Personnel Training Consortium for the Legal Advice Training for Court Support Staff. Front left is the Juvenile Justice Vision 20/20 Excellence in Partnership Award presented in June 2023. Front right is the Judicial Education Award presented by the ABA Judicial Division National Conference of Specialized Court Judges in 2015.

gining, offerings for juvenile workers, which predated MJJ, were particularly robust. Multi-day seminars for court administrators encouraged problem-solving in areas such as security, caseload management, records management, and personnel matters. Court professionals such as district court magistrates, juvenile caseworkers, and domestic relations mediators received training at the beginning of their tenures, some as a statutory requirement. Additional trainings for experienced probate registers, magistrates, probation officers, court recorders/reporters, and others were offered regularly.<sup>21</sup>

To promote internal expertise and – on a practical level – to support so many educational programs, judges and court staff were tapped to share their knowledge with colleagues. To enhance faculty’s confidence and skills, MJJ launched a series of faculty development seminars that introduced adult education principles and a range

of effective and engaging instructional strategies. By 1981, a total of 68 judges and court staff in three cohorts participated. Serving as MJJ faculty became a point of pride for many.<sup>22</sup>

By the early 1980s, MJJ added publications to its menu of educational services. Court staff, who in large part did not possess law degrees, received the *Handbook of Legal Terms*, written in plain language. Benchguides, which later became full-fledged benchbooks written by publications staff, were created by and for judges. Benchbooks featured checklists, scripts, and detailed legal analysis for specific procedures. In addition, a monthly *Impact* publication summarized new appellate decisions, new legislation, court rules, administrative orders, jury instructions, and other items.<sup>23</sup>

All these efforts resulted in national recognition: the first award of excellence given by the American Bar Association’s National Conference of Special Court Judges. MJJ was selected from among 33 states, with California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin as runners up. The award recognized MJJ’s high-caliber service to judges of special courts, including district and probate courts, which were of limited jurisdiction but handled about 90% of all litigation in civil and criminal matters at the time. New Supervising Justice Michael F. Cavanagh credited the dedication of Justice Ryan, who had just resigned from the Court to serve on the federal Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, and the high priority placed on the quality of its faculty and cross-professional approach.<sup>24</sup>

### A Maturing Institute

In the years since its inception, MJJ has continued to expand its offerings, partner with other education providers, and focus on its core mission of enhancing excellence through education. Many of the programs and resources initiated during MJJ’s early years continue today. In addition to benchbooks, MJJ’s publications team develops additional “quick reference materials,” which provide standalone user-friendly resources. Both are available to the public on MJJ’s website. These resources not only serve the judiciary, but they also provide handy reference guides to practitioners and anyone with an interest and internet access.

New Judge Orientation has expanded from three days into a more in-depth program spread over several months. In addition to formal training, new judges are



paired with mentors to help ease their transition to their new roles.

MJI also supports the Michigan Supreme Court's biennial judicial conference and various judicial association conferences. Regional judicial conferences continue, although the format has changed from a multi-day event to a more concise one-day format.

Moreover, MJI's court professionals team offers trainings throughout the year. In addition to sessions for magistrates, referees, juvenile probation officers, and the like, there is a popular Court Support Staff Certification Training, which focuses on the purposes and responsibilities of courts along with more technical training.

MJI also encompasses the Supreme Court's Learning Center, which provides education and hands-on exhibits to members of the public in a museum-style gallery at the Michigan Hall of Justice. Additionally, the Learning Center prepares a monthly educators newsletter, *Justitia*, which currently reaches almost 3,000 subscribers.

Perhaps the biggest change in recent years has been the availability of remote video technology to allow MJI to reach judges (and other court staff) at their location through webinars. During the COVID pandemic, webinar offerings were significantly expanded, and while MJI still offers many in-person events, a hybrid ap-

proach has increased accessibility across the State of Michigan.

### **Boldly Forward**

So what does the future hold for MJI? One of the most significant recent changes was the enactment of Michigan's Continuing Judicial Education Rules. While MJI's trainings had been voluntary, the Michigan Supreme Court recently enacted rules requiring all judicial officers (including Supreme Court Justices, Court of Appeals Judges, Trial Court Judges, Referees, and Magistrates) to earn 24 hours of continuing judicial education credits over the course of two years.

To facilitate this process for all judicial officers, MJI has expanded its offerings in several ways. First, MJI has launched a monthly webinar series (currently scheduled on the second Wednesday of every month). Recent offerings include *Helping You Sleep at Night: Identifying Intimate Partner Violence in Your Cases* Webinar and *Key Trends and Developments in the Sovereign Citizen Movement: What Judges Need to Know*. These webinars are also recorded, edited, and transformed into on-demand learning modules which judicial officers can access at their convenience.

And there are more on-demand learning modules on the way. Following feedback from court users, MJI is currently expanding its on-demand learning modules for court administrators, probate registers, and court staff.

Another significant development is the creation of a juvenile justice education team, focused on providing quality educational opportunities for all those in the juvenile justice field within and outside the courts. Traditionally, MJI has focused on training judges and court staff, and with these trainings and resources getting off the ground in 2024, MJI will reach more people than ever before.

MJI has a proud past and looks forward to a bright future. While times and technologies have changed, MJI continues to strive to enhance excellence through education by leveraging new delivery methods and expanding its audience. MJI remains a leader in the field of judicial branch education, building on strong a foundation while expanding to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead.



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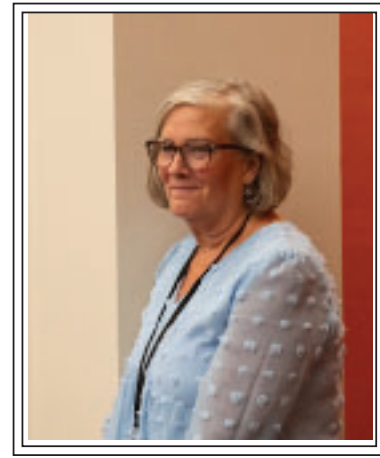
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## Meet Executive Director Lynn Seaks

Lynn assumed the role of Executive Director in December 2022 after the departure of Carrie Sampson. She's a veteran of state government and the Hall of Justice, having previously served as the Community Outreach Coordinator for the Supreme Court planning portrait unveilings, Court Community Connections programs, Adoption Day events, Hall of Justice parties, and many other special events.

In her position as Executive Director of the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society, Lynn has continued that “party-planning” expertise, tackling four portrait unveilings over the past eighteen months, and will host another later this summer. Everyday tasks include building membership, obtaining corporate sponsorships, and increasing the visibility of the Society.

And the return to the Hall of Justice is a return home: “I’ve had a truly amazing career and have been very lucky, particularly when I look back and take stock of the wonderful people I’ve had the opportunity to work with!” Over her tenure at the Court, Lynn worked for five Chief Justices (Clifford Taylor, Marilyn Kelly, Robert Young, Stephen Markman, and Bridget McCormack) and four general counsels.

If you haven’t already done so, please introduce yourself to Lynn at the next Historical Society event, or whenever you are at the Hall of Justice. The Historical Society is located on the third floor.

Lynn lives in Holt, has two grown sons, and five grandchildren.

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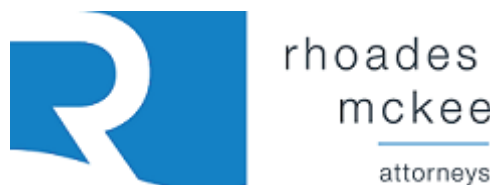
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The Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society, a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation, collects, preserves, and displays documents, records, and memorabilia relating to the Michigan Supreme Court and the other Courts of Michigan, promotes the study of the history of Michigan's courts, and seeks to increase public awareness of Michigan's legal heritage. The Society sponsors and conducts historical research, provides speakers and educational materials for students, and sponsors and provides publications, portraits and memorials, special events, and projects consistent with its mission.

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