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Robert F. Gillett Receives Foundation's Access to Justice Award



Robert F. Gillett

The Michigan State Bar Foundation's Access to Justice Award honors individuals who have significantly advanced access to justice for the poor in Michigan. The 2011 inaugural award will be presented to Robert F. Gillett to recognize his career and volunteer leadership advancing access to justice for indigent persons. Since 1983, Mr. Gillett has been Executive Director of Legal Services of South Central Michigan, a nonprofit agency based in Ann Arbor providing civil legal aid to the poor. During his tenure, the program added statewide services and went from an annual budget of \$500,000 to more than \$5 million. In addition, Mr. Gillett is a national and state legal services leader and has been a founder or counsel to groups such as the Washtenaw Housing Alliance, the Washtenaw Health Plan and Avalon Housing. He served as Chair of the National Legal Aid and Defender Association's Civil Policy Group; Chair of the State Bar Pro Bono Initiative; member of the State Bar's Committee on Justice Initiatives, Judicial Crossroads Access to Justice Committee and Access to Justice Campaign Internal Cabinet; and Co-Chair of the Michigan State Planning Body which helps coordinate civil and criminal legal assistance for low-income persons. Mr. Gillett has served on numerous other state and national groups working to improve legal aid for the poor, and he also taught poverty law as a visiting associate professor at the University of Michigan Law School. He has received several awards, including the City of Ann Arbor Leadership In Community Development Recognition and the Wilma T. Donuhue Award for Advocacy for Seniors. Mr. Gillett received his B.A. from Kenyon College and his J.D. from the University of Michigan.

Foundation President Margaret Nichols said "Robert F. Gillett is an excellent role model of the leadership and contributions the award recognizes. He represents the highest traditions of the legal profession through his dedication to ensuring access to justice for those in need." Ms. Nichols will present the Access to Justice Award to Mr. Gillett on behalf of the Foundation during the State Bar's awards banquet on September 14, 2011.

The Michigan State Bar Foundation provides leadership and grants to improve access for all to the justice system, including support for civil legal aid to the poor, law-related education, and conflict resolution. For more information, visit www.msbf.org.