

FOUNDATION BRIEF

Investing in Access to Justice



Dear Colleague,

We are pleased to present our inaugural edition of the Foundation Brief, a newsletter curated to bring you updates on the Foundation's investments and news.

One of this year's notable highlights is the celebration of the **40th Anniversary of the Fellows Program**. With over 1,500 distinguished attorneys, the Fellows Program continues to provide vital support to the Foundation's work. In light of this milestone, we developed a working group of the Board and have made some changes to the Fellows Program outlined below. We look forward to celebrating this anniversary at our Fellows Reception at the Hall of Justice in Lansing on September 18, 2024. Thank you for your partnership and ongoing support to improve the civil justice system and increase access to justice for all.

Jennifer S. Bentley
Executive Director

HAPPY 40TH ANNIVERSARY TO THE FELLOWS



Invitation to the Fellows Program is extended to distinguished attorneys for their professional excellence and service to the community. Contributing over \$2.1 million since inception, the Fellows Program plays a vital role in supporting the Foundation's programs and investments in the justice system.

[Meet the Fellows of the Foundation](#)

JOIN US FOR THE 2024 FELLOWS RECEPTION

Wednesday, September 18, 2024

Michigan Hall of Justice

5:00 p.m.

Please join us to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Fellows Program. The reception will include a presentation by Fellows Chairperson, Hon. Victoria A. Roberts and guest speaker, Chief Justice Elizabeth T. Clement. We will also be honoring the 2024 Class of Fellows and presenting the Foundation's 2024 awards.

NEW CHANGES TO THE FELLOWS PROGRAM

The Fellows Program will now be offering additional giving levels and changing the minimum giving level of \$1,000 to \$1,500. The new giving levels are \$10,000, \$5,000, \$2,500, and \$1,500. Pledges may be paid over a 10-year period or shorter. Fellows who previously pledged \$1,000 will be grandfathered in at that level but may choose to increase their pledge. Fellows who have fulfilled a prior pledge, may increase their pledge and pay the remaining amount.

To broaden the reach of the Fellows Program, we have developed a process that allows individuals who are interested in joining the Fellows Program to complete an application for nomination that includes references from 3-5 current Fellows. The applications will be reviewed by the Fellows Nominating Committee and decided by the Board of Directors.

FELLOWS NOMINATIONS ARE BEING ACCEPTED

Each year, current Fellows nominate colleagues for the Fellows Program. In celebration of the 40th Anniversary, we hope to increase nominations. Please help us by nominating a colleague or colleagues for the 2024 Class of Fellows by completing the Fellows Nomination Form or the Fellows Self-Nomination Application Form below.

The deadline for submitting 2024 Fellows nominations is **Friday, May 24th, 2024.**

[Fellows Nomination Form](#)

[Self-Nomination Application](#)

For questions, please email fellows@msbf.org or call 517-346-6402.

SPOTLIGHT ON FELLOWS



Honorable Victoria A. Roberts is a retired judge of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. Her distinguished legal career spans over 40 years with 25 years in judicial service. A trailblazer in her field, Judge Roberts is dedicated to ensuring the equal administration of justice under the law. Judge Roberts became a Fellow in 1997, has served on the Michigan State Bar Foundation Board of Directors since 2003, and became the Chairperson of the Fellows Program in 2022.

Why did you choose the legal profession as a career?

I had not planned on law as a career. I was discriminated against when I tried to obtain a job as a journalist in my senior year of college. I turned to the law to address and combat the type of discrimination I faced and to help others who found themselves in similar situations.

Please share any community service you have participated in and are most proud of?

I handled numerous housing discrimination cases and eventually became a member of the board and Chair of the board of the Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit.

Spotlight On Fellows cont'd.

I held that position for a number of years and was deeply involved in the selection of cases to bring suit in. I am an active volunteer in the St. Leo's Soup Kitchen in Detroit where we prepare hot meals from scratch for 130-150 people four days per week. I was active in Big Brothers Big Sisters. I currently serve as a volunteer mediator in the Prison Mediation Program which I established when I was a judge. During COVID, as a member of its launch team, I actively helped to establish LifeChurch Riverside of Detroit as a virtual church. I also began a program shortly after I went on the bench to increase diversity in the ranks of law clerks. My program trained hundreds of law students over the course of the years and I was a trainer. The program continues even though I retired.

Why is the Fellows Program special to you?

It is a wonderful, satisfying feeling to give away money for the benefit of poor people in Michigan who need legal services. The class divide in this country is enormous. The Fellows are integral ambassadors on behalf of the Foundation to close that divide and contribute labor and money to advance the lawyer obligation to give back. It is a privilege to practice law and comes with obligations. The Fellows is only a small way that I can give back to people in need in Michigan. A fun fact that you would care to share with your colleagues.

I was a "one and done" marathoner at the tender age of 54. I issued a challenge to my sister; I didn't think she would accept! We had run shorter races before and since. The discipline of training for runs demonstrated so much to me, the value of discipline, goal setting, hard work and resilience. I draw on the experience of training to run 26 miles - and actually running it - whenever I think about giving up.

LEGAL AID IN ACTION



RESTORING BENEFITS FOR A VETERAN

A Vietnam veteran who had custody of his two grandchildren reached out to Legal Aid for help when he was asked to repay unemployment benefits received during the pandemic. Due to a delayed project at work, his hours and earnings were reduced, making him eligible to receive the benefits. After receiving the benefits, he received a notice from the Unemployment Agency reversing the decision and demanding repayment. He started repaying the money and then due to hardship, he contacted Legal Aid for help. He prevailed at his hearing, his benefits were reinstated, and he was issued a refund of the money he had repaid. He is now able to take care of his grandchildren without fear of losing his income.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE GRANTS

The Foundation is currently accepting applications for Administration of Justice (AOJ) Grants. If you have an innovative project that improves the delivery of legal services or access to justice, please review the grant criteria found on the Foundation's website at [Administration of Justice Grants](#). Grant applications for the next round of project grants are due **May 10, 2024**.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE CAMPAIGN

Access to Justice Campaign



The campaign is a collaborative centralized campaign, administered by the Foundation in partnership with the State Bar of Michigan, to increase resources for 14 regional and statewide civil legal aid programs in Michigan. In 2023, the Campaign received over \$1.2 million in financial gifts from participating firms and attorneys. The Campaign extends its gratitude to the 42 Leadership Firms who gave a minimum of \$300 per attorney. For more information about the campaign see www.atjfund.org

[2023 Recognition List](#)

[Donate to the Campaign](#)

WHERE YOU BANK MATTERS



**BANKING
ON JUSTICE**
Where You Bank Matters

The Foundation increases the impact of Michigan's IOLTA program by ensuring that eligible financial institutions pay comparable IOLTA interest rates and by maintaining our Banking on Justice Campaign. We encourage Michigan attorneys to bank

with one of the Banking on Justice participating financial institutions that voluntarily pay higher interest rates on IOLTA accounts.

[Find a Banking on Justice Partner](#)

INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?

If you are interested in volunteering your time and expertise, many of the nonprofit legal aid programs participating in the Access to Justice Campaign, have opportunities available. You can find a list of these programs with links to their websites.

[Find a Legal Aid Program](#)

2023-2024 MICHIGAN STATE BAR FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

Craig H. Lubben, President
Miller Johnson

Julie I. Fershtman, Vice-President
Foster, Swift, Collins & Smith, PC

Richard K. Rappleye, Treasurer
R&I Associates

Ronda L. Tate Truvillion, Secretary
Lewis & Munday, P.C.

2023-2024 MICHIGAN STATE BAR FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS CONT'D.

DIRECTORS

Thomas R. Behm
Gruel Mills Nims & Pylman PLLC

Thomas W. Cranmer
Miller Canfield

Steven G. Howell
Dickinson Wright

W. Anthony Jenkins
Tony Jenkins Law PLLC

Karen Leppanen Miller
Retired, Community Foundation for
Southeast Michigan

Hon. William B. Murphy
Retired, Michigan Court of Appeals, Dykema

Jonathan E. Osgood
Ford Motor Company

Michael L. Pitt
Pitt McGehee Palmer Bonanni & Rivers PC

Robert F. Riley
Riley & Hurley, PC

Hon. Victoria A. Roberts
Retired, U.S. District Court Eastern District of
Michigan

Richard A. Soble
Soble Rowe Krichbaum LLP

CONNECT WITH US!

To join our mailing list, share your career milestones, or have questions, please send an email to msbf@msbf.org or call 517-346-6406.

Follow us on social media:



The Michigan State Bar Foundation is a tax-exempt charitable organization, established in 1947 and 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. The Foundation administers the Access to Justice Campaign. More information about the Foundation can be found at www.msbf.org.