



October 19, 2022
Annual Report
Report of the 7th District (MI, OH, WV)
Honorable Michelle Rick

MICHIGAN

Michigan's membership has blossomed! In 2019, membership hovered around 18, after many years of counting membership on 2 hands. We have been a small, but mighty mix of trial court judges, lawyers, and law students. As of 2022, membership has risen to approximately 60 members, and membership includes Michigan Supreme Court Justices, appellate, trial, and administrative judges, lawyers, law students, and retired judges. Wow!!

The reason for this membership boom is simple: the 2022 annual conference in Detroit. As the core membership began planning the 2022 conference, people learned more about NAWJ, and they wanted to be a part of this vibrant organization. Michigan's members recognize the value of their membership, as well as the strength of the organization!

Throughout the last year, Michigan's members have lived NAWJ's mission both on and off the bench, in and out of the courtroom and classroom. Here are but a few examples of our inspiring members:

MI state co-chair, Zenell Brown, Executive Administrator 3rd Circuit Court



Zenell Brown is the Executive Court Administrator for the Third Judicial Circuit of Michigan (Wayne County) and Co-chair of the 2022 NAWJ Annual Conference. Zenell is a moderator, author, lawyer, DEI Champion, and all around extraordinary role model for women in the legal profession. In 2022 alone, Zenell was honored with two awards: The American Bar Association's Robert B. Yegge Award and the National Association of Court Management's Perkins Award.

Zenell currently serves as a member of the State of Michigan's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. The Commission is charged with the initial goal of exploring issues related to the demographics of the workforce that support our judiciary and training within the judicial branches.

MI state co-chair, Judge Cori Barkman 29th Circuit Court



Judge Barkman has been integral in the planning and execution of MentorJet programs with Michigan's law schools. Most recently, Judge Barkman hosted an in-person MentorJet at Western Michigan University, Thomas M. Cooley Law School in Lansing. The event was held on October 7, 2022. Judge Barkman also provides judicial outreach to stakeholders in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Judge Barkman is a life member of the Sixth Circuit Judicial Conference, and a member of the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan, the Western District of Michigan Chapter of the Federal Bar Association, the Ingham County Bar Association, and the Michigan Judges Association.

Judge Debra Nance, 46th District Court



In addition to her bench duties, Judge Nance developed and presented “Careers in the Courtroom” to encourage elementary and high school students to pursue careers as defense attorneys, prosecutors, civil attorneys and judges. The program also introduces students to the importance of jury service. In addition, for adults, Nance has designed and presented “How to Prepare for Your Day in Court” and “Tips for Landlords and Tenants,” which she shares with neighborhood/condo associations, church groups, and veterans’ groups.

Judge Nance also hosts *Your Best Chance with Judge Nance*, a radio program designed to provide the listener with access to justice by increasing the public’s understanding of the criminal justice system, the court process and the people who serve there. The show broadcasts throughout the State of Michigan. NAWJ is grateful that Judge Nance promoted the Detroit Annual conference on her radio program.

Judge Miriam Bazzi, 3rd Judicial Circuit



Judge Bazzi is the Chair of the 3rd Circuit's Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Judge Bazzi prioritizes mentoring young women and helping future generations as a way to give back to a community that has supported her in her legal career. She regularly mentors’ youth, law students, and lawyers. In 2021, Judge Bazzi participated in the Arab American Institute Foundation (AAIF) launch of the first Moroccan cohort of the U.S. – MENA Experiential Partnership - an initiative pioneered by AAIF with support from the U.S. State Department Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). The Partnership paired distinguished current and former Arab American public servants and policy practitioners with officials in Morocco, for an innovative, year-long, peer learning and exchange of practices around the themes of decentralization, participatory governance, and public private partnerships. The Experiential Partnership allows public servants in the Arab world to make meaningful and lasting connections with American elected officials, to visit the United States for intensive training in good governance, to attract and develop public private partnerships, and to develop and fund small policy projects to benefit their local communities.

Judge Cynthia Stephens (ret), Michigan Court of Appeals



Judge Stephens recently retired after 14 years of service on the Michigan Court of Appeals, including serving on the Michigan Court of Claims.

In addition to being the first African American woman to be appointed to the state Court of Claims bench, Hon. Cynthia Stephens served as a judge for Michigan’s Third Circuit Court and the 36th District Court, in Detroit. Judge Stephens began her judicial service in 1981. Judge Stephens’ contributions to the judiciary and to community cannot be overstated. She has been active in bar work including 16 years as a Commissioner of the State Bar of Michigan, chairing its Justice Initiatives Committee, Communications Committee and Children’s Task Force. Judge Stephens is the former chair of the Association of Black Judges of Michigan, a former member of the Executive Board of the National Bar Association and its Judicial Council. Judge Stephens has been honored by many civic and religious organizations throughout her professional career, including the inaugural Woodrow Smith Community Service Award from the Shrines of the Black Madonna, the Golden Heritage Award from Little Rock Baptist Church and the Susan B. Anthony Award from the City of Detroit Human Rights Department.

She was awarded the State Bar of Michigan’s highest honor, the Roberts P. Hudson Award in 2005. Following her retirement from the bench in 2022, the State Bar of Michigan bestowed on Judge Stephens the Frank J. Kelley Distinguished Public Service Award.

Judge Deborah McNabb, 17th Circuit Court



Judge McNabb serves as a faculty member and an advisory board member for "A Family Law Model for Europe" project, Waterford Institute of Technology, Waterford, Ireland. She sits on the Kent County Child Death Review Team, as well as the State Bar of Michigan Children's Law Section Council. Ms. McNabb is a past president of the Referees Association of Michigan and a member of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, where she is a member of the Domestic Relations, Family Courts, and International Referees and Magistrates Committees; the American Association of Family and Conciliation Courts; and the American Judicature Society.

She is also a member of the Family Law Section of the State Bar of Michigan; the Family Law and Parents and Children Sections of the Grand Rapids Bar Association; and the Family Law Section and Judicial Division of the American Bar Association.

Judge McNabb has also been a frequent presenter for ICLE, the Michigan Judicial Institute, Michigan State Court Administrative Office, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, and Grand Rapids Bar Association. Judge McNabb serves as Chair of the Michigan Judges Association Family Law committee.

Donna MacKenzie, Associate Member, Olsman MacKenzie Peacock & Wallace



Donna MacKenzie is a force and a role model for women in the law. She has a vibrant Plaintiff's practice, representing victims of nursing home abuse and neglect, medical malpractice and sexual assault. She is a former president of the Women Lawyers Association. Donna received the F. Scott Baldwin Award in 2014 from the American Association for Justice for being an outstanding young trial lawyer.

Donna is the former President of the Michigan Association for Justice. She has received many awards for her contributions to the legal profession, including receiving the Evelyn Forrest Respected Advocate Award from the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan – Oakland | Women's Bar Association in 2020, being recognized by Crain's Detroit Business as one of Michigan's Most Notable Women Lawyers in 2017, being selected to the Michigan Lawyers Weekly Leaders in the Law Class of 2017, receiving the F. Scott Baldwin Award from the American Association for Justice in 2015, being named to the Michigan Top 100 Super Lawyers list from 2015-2017 and 2019, and being recognized in 2016, and 2018 and 2020 by Best Lawyers in America as Medical Malpractice "Lawyer of the Year" in Troy.

In 2022, Donna received the Respected Advocate Award from the Michigan Defense Trial Counsel. Every year Michigan Association for Justice (MAJ) and the Michigan Defense Trial Counsel (MDTC) each presents a "Respected Advocate Award." MAJ gives the award to a member of the defense bar for the purpose of recognizing and honoring the individual's history of successful representation of clients and adherence to the highest standards of ethics. The MDTC does the same annually for a plaintiff's practitioner.

Jocelyn Flemons, Associate Member, Miller Cohen, PLC



Jocelyn Flemons is a licensed educator and attorney. Jocelyn graduated from the University of Detroit Mercy, magna cum laude, with a Bachelor of Arts in Education in 2010. After successfully working as an educator for several years, Jocelyn decided to go back to school and learn about ways she could help defend worker's rights. As a Fellow, Jocelyn attended Detroit Mercy Law, and she earned her juris doctorate degree in 2021.

While in law school, Jocelyn served as an intern to Honorable Chief Judge Denise Page Hood at the Federal District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. She also served as a student extern for Detroit Mercy Law Federal Pro Se Legal Assistance Clinic, where she helped improve access to justice by assisting pro se litigants with their cases. As an active student at Mercy Law, Jocelyn served on the board of the Immigration Law Association, and she was a member of Moot Court. Jocelyn is responsible for bringing the Detroit Youth Choir to the Detroit 2022 conference.

INTRODUCING DISTRICT 7'S NEW DIRECTOR Judge Miriam Perry, 15th District Court: It has been my distinct privilege to serve as Director for District 7 on 2 occasions. I am delighted to announce that Judge Miriam Perry will be succeeding me. I have no doubt that District 7 is in exceptional hands!



Miriam A. Perry was appointed to the 15th Judicial District Court bench by Governor Gretchen Whitmer on December 16, 2020. She presides over criminal and traffic cases. Judge Perry received her Bachelor of Arts in Economics in 1993 from Spelman College. She attended the University of Michigan Law School and was awarded her Juris Doctor degree in 1998. Prior to her appointment, she served as a clinical fellow at the University of Michigan of Veterans Legal Clinic. Judge Perry was an assistant public defender for the Washtenaw County Public Defender's Office for over 14 years. From 2001 to 2006, she worked as a judicial attorney at the Third Circuit Court of Michigan and then briefly as a law clerk at the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. After law school, she participated in the Japanese Exchange in Teaching program in Japan for two years. In addition to being an active NAWJ member, Judge Perry is a member of the State Bar of Michigan, Washtenaw County Bar Association, Michigan District Judges

Association, Association of Black Judges of Michigan, American Judges Association, Black Women Lawyers Association of Michigan, Women Lawyers Association of Michigan, NAACP, Ann Arbor Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and the Kiwanis Club.

OHIO: No report.

WEST VIRGINIA: No Report.

Respectfully submitted,
Michelle Rick, Michigan Court of Appeals

