

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF JUSTICES



CHIEF JUSTICE BRIDGET MARY MCCORMACK

Term expires January 1, 2029

Chief Justice Bridget Mary McCormack joined the Michigan Supreme Court in January 2013, and became Chief Justice in January 2019.

Before her election to the Court in November 2012, she was a law professor and dean at the University of Michigan Law School. Since joining the Court, Chief Justice McCormack continues to teach at the Law School.

Chief Justice McCormack is a graduate of the New York University Law School, where she was a Root-Tilden scholar. She spent the first five years of her legal career in New York, with the Legal Aid Society and the Office of the Appellate Defender. In 1996, she became a faculty fellow at the Yale Law School.

In 1998, she joined the University of Michigan Law School faculty. At Michigan Law, she taught criminal law, legal ethics, and various clinical courses. Her scholarship focused on the professional benefits of clinical legal education. She also created new clinics at the law school, including a Domestic Violence Clinic and a Pediatric Health Advocacy Clinic.

In 2002, she was named Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs. Responsible for the continuing development of the law school's practical education, she continued to expand the clinical offerings at Michigan Law School, launching a Mediation Clinic, a Low Income Taxpayer Clinic, an International Transactions Clinic, a Human Trafficking Clinic, a Juvenile Justice Clinic, and an Entrepreneurship Clinic. In her capacity as professor and associate dean, she conducted and supervised civil and criminal litigation at all levels of the state and federal courts. The University of Michigan Law School's clinical programs are now recognized nationally as one of the best places to be trained as a lawyer.

In 2008, then-Associate Dean McCormack cofounded the Michigan Innocence Clinic, in which students represent wrongfully convicted Michiganders. The clinic has exonerated over 22 people so far, and has shined a light on the important justice issues underlying wrongful conviction.

In 2014, the Attorney General of the United States appointed Chief Justice McCormack to the National Commission on Forensic Science. In 2019, Governor Whitmer appointed her as cochair of the Michigan Joint Task Force on Jail and Pretrial Incarceration.

Chief Justice McCormack is an editor on the ABA's *Litigation Magazine*, a member of the ABA Council on Legal Education and Admission to the Bar, a board member of the Washtenaw County Chapter of Families Against Narcotics, a member of the University Musical Society's National Council, and a board member of Kids Kicking Cancer.

Chief Justice McCormack publishes regularly in professional journals and media.

As the Chief Justice, McCormack has promoted statewide initiatives devoted to improving the courts service to the public, and in particular on improving equal access to justice.

Chief Justice McCormack is married to Steven Croley, a partner at Latham and Watkins. They have four adult children and enjoy frequent family trips to west Michigan.



JUSTICE
RICHARD H. BERNSTEIN

Term expires January 1, 2023

Justice Richard Bernstein became the first blind justice, elected by voters statewide, to the Michigan Supreme Court in November 2014. With a commitment to justice and fairness, Bernstein began his 8-year term in January 2015.

Prior to being elected to Michigan's highest court, Justice Bernstein was known as a tireless advocate for disabled rights as an attorney heading the public service division for The Sam Bernstein Law Firm in Farmington Hills, Michigan. Blind since birth, Justice Bernstein is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Michigan and earned his juris doctorate from Northwestern University School of Law.

Committed to taking action to help clients who needed him, Justice Bernstein's cases often set national standards protecting the rights and safety of people with and without disabilities.

Among his cases in private practice, he represented the Paralyzed Veterans of America in partnership with the United States Department of Justice in an action against the University of Michigan to allow for safe access for disabled individuals when the university's alterations to the stadium failed to accommodate and represent disabled visitors. The case helped establish guidelines that are used by all commercial facilities across the country.

He also successfully partnered with the United States Department of Justice to force the City of Detroit to fix broken wheelchair lifts on its buses, establishing a precedent for accessibility in public transportation. Further, Bernstein represented disabled residents against the Oakland County Road Commission after "roundabout" traffic circles were built without disabled access, impacting future ADA compliance for road construction throughout the United States.

In a landmark settlement against Delta Airlines and Detroit Metro Airport, Bernstein gained accessibility for disabled fliers, helping set the standard for which airlines and airports are to be covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. A proponent of education, he argued for, and won, preservation of special education funding throughout the state and filed a federal suit against the American Bar Association to put an end to its discriminatory practices toward blind students via requirement of the Law School Admissions Test. He also challenged the City of New York to make Central Park and all parks safer for visitors and accessible for disabled and visually impaired individuals.

Bernstein previously served an 8-year term on the Wayne State University Board of Governors, elected by voters statewide, serving as its chair from 2009 to 2010. He also served as an adjunct professor in the political science department at the University of Michigan.

Honors Justice Bernstein has received include: "Michiganian of the Year" by the *Detroit News*, one of Crain's Detroit Business' "40 Under 40" and recognition on worldwide television by CNN as a leader in keeping government honest. He was selected by The Young Lawyers Section of the State Bar of Michigan as the 2003 to 2004 Regeana Myrick Outstanding Young Lawyer Award recipient for outstanding commitment to public service and is the recipient of the 2008 John W. Cummiskey Pro Bono Award from the State Bar of Michigan in recognition of his leadership as an advocate and activist.

Michigan Lawyers Weekly named Justice Bernstein a 2009 Leader in the Law, and the University of Michigan presented him with the James T. Neubacher Award in 2011 for his unwavering commitment to equal rights and opportunities for people with disabilities. Also in 2011, L. Brooks Patterson, Michigan's Oakland County Executive, selected Justice Bernstein as one of the region's Elite 40 Under 40. In 2013, Justice Bernstein was inducted into the National Jewish Sports Hall of Fame.

In his spare time, Justice Bernstein is an avid runner, completing 24 marathons—including 14 New York City marathons—the full Ironman triathlon in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho in 2008 and the Israman triathlon's half Ironman in Eilat, Israel in 2011. He also previously cohosted a 1-hour legal radio show called "Fighting for Justice" on WCHB-AM (1200) in Metro Detroit.



JUSTICE
MEGAN KATHLEEN CAVANAGH

Term expires January 1, 2027

Justice Megan Kathleen Cavanagh is a life-long Michigander who grew up in East Lansing and lives in metro Detroit. She is a graduate of the University of Michigan College of Engineering and Wayne State University Law School. Before joining the Michigan Supreme Court in January of 2019, she had over 15 years of experience as one of Michigan's top appellate attorneys and was a shareholder at Garan Luow Miller P.C. in Detroit.

Justice Cavanagh is the Supreme Court Liaison to Tribal Courts, Child Welfare Services, the Attorney Grievance Commission and the Judicial Tenure Commission. She also serves on the Attorney General's Elder Abuse Task Force.

Justice Cavanagh has served as chair of the Appellate Practice Section of the State Bar of Michigan, as a council person for the Negligence Section of the State Bar of Michigan, as cochair of the Michigan Bench Bar Appellate Conference Foundation, and as a member of the Michigan Attorney Grievance Commission.

Prior to her election to the Court, Justice Cavanagh was rated as one of Michigan's Super Lawyers. She was honored by *Michigan Lawyer's Weekly* as Lawyer of the Year in 2006 and a Woman in the Law in 2017.

Justice Cavanagh and her husband have four children.



JUSTICE
ELIZABETH T. CLEMENT

Term expires January 1, 2027

Justice Elizabeth T. Clement joined the Michigan Supreme Court on November 17, 2017, becoming the 113th Justice and the 11th woman to serve on the bench. Clement serves as the Court's liaison to the State Court Administrative Office Department of Child Welfare Services and liaison to Juvenile Justice in Michigan. Child Welfare Services provides assistance to juvenile courts on child welfare matters, including child protective proceedings, foster care, adoption, termination of parental rights, permanency outcomes, and data collection and analysis.

Clement has recently presented as a panelist for the National Association of Women Judges Webinar- "The Critical Roles of Child Welfare Judicial Leadership and Community Collaboration: Building Resilience in the Wake of COVID-19." She coauthored *"The Moment to Transform Child Protective Courts"* with University of Michigan Professor Vivek Sankaran for the *Child Welfare League of America Essay Collection: COVID-19 and Child Welfare: Challenges and Responses*. Clement also serves as cochair with Justice Megan Cavanagh and MDHHS Child Welfare Director Joo Chang for the Child Welfare Leadership Workgroup, a collaborative effort between the judiciary and MDHHS focused on child welfare system improvement.

In addition to her role with Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice, Clement also serves as the liaison to the 199 Problem-Solving Courts in the state of Michigan and the Michigan Judicial Institute. Problem-Solving Courts include drug and sobriety, mental health, veterans, and other nontraditional courts. These special court programs focus on providing treatment and intense supervision to offenders, resulting in improved quality of life, reduced crime, safer communities, and avoiding costly incarceration. The Michigan Judicial Institute is the Court's training arm for the judiciary.

Prior to her election to the court, Clement served as chief legal counsel in the Executive Branch, advising on a wide variety of legal, legislative, and policy matters. Her duties as chief legal counsel included working with the Attorney General's Office on litigation affecting the state of Michigan, negotiating tribal compacts and settlement agreements, and interviewing and recommending appointees to Court of Appeals and Supreme Court judicial vacancies. She previously held the positions of cabinet secretary and deputy chief of staff, as well as deputy legal counsel in the Governor's Office.

Clement also served as legal counsel in the Michigan Senate in 2010 where she provided legal research, analysis, and advice on legislation and management of the office. In addition, she was responsible for the State Senate advice and consent process including providing reports and recommendations on appointees. Prior to this role, she served in the Senate Majority Policy Office from 2006 to 2010, where Clement provided analysis and research to the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senate Health Policy Committee, and the Senate Local and State Affairs Committee.

Clement was a partner at Clement Law, PLLC, from 2002 to 2006, where she represented individuals primarily in the areas of family law, adoption, probate, estate planning, and criminal law. Prior to working in private practice, Justice Clement worked as a legislative aide to the Senate Majority Leader in the Michigan Senate.

Clement was licensed to the State Bar of Michigan in 2002. She graduated from Michigan State University College of Law that same year, where she served as an executive member of the Moot Court Board. She attended Michigan State University on an academic scholarship and graduated in 1999 with a B.A. in political science.

Justice Clement lives with her husband and their four children in East Lansing.



JUSTICE
DAVID F. VIVIANO

Term expires January 1, 2025

David F. Viviano is the 109th Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court. He was appointed to the Supreme Court by former Governor Rick Snyder in 2013 and was re-elected to the court by wide margins in 2014 and 2016. He is the Supreme Court's point person for court technology and supervises Michigan's statewide e-filing initiative.

Justice Viviano previously served as chief judge of the Macomb County Circuit and Probate Courts. As chief judge, he was responsible for the administration of one of the busiest trial courts in Michigan. He was first-elected to the circuit court in 2006, and during his tenure as a trial judge presided over both civil and criminal cases. He also had the privilege of serving on the circuit court bench with his father, retired Judge Antonio Viviano, and his sister, Judge Kathryn Viviano.

Justice Viviano has participated in a number of initiatives to improve the administration of justice. In 2008, he worked with a small group of judges to test reforms to Michigan's jury system, many of which were adopted and are being used throughout Michigan. For their efforts, Justice Viviano and his colleagues received a national award for jury innovation. Justice Viviano also teaches jury management at the Michigan Judicial Institute's New Judges' School.

Justice Viviano is a strong advocate for technological innovation in the court system. He has long been a proponent of a statewide e-filing system and has worked to improve how our local courts manage electronic data and share it with the public and other units of government.

Before becoming a judge, Justice Viviano practiced law at two nationally-recognized law firms and then founded his own law firm in Mt. Clemens. Justice Viviano also served as City Attorney for the City of Center Line.

Justice Viviano received his bachelor of arts degree from Hillsdale College and his juris doctor from the University of Michigan Law School.

Justice Viviano and his wife, Neran, live in Sterling Heights with their four children.



**JUSTICE
ELIZABETH M. WELCH**

Term expires January 1, 2029

Justice Elizabeth M. Welch joined the Michigan Supreme Court on January 1, 2021. Prior to joining the Supreme Court, she counseled nonprofit organizations, businesses, and individuals on labor/employment law matters and represented her clients in arbitrations, administrative agency matters, and litigation. Justice Welch also handled abuse/neglect matters (pro bono), worked of counsel to a criminal defense law practice, counseled nonprofit organizations on board governance, and served as local counsel for municipal clients on litigation related to the opioid epidemic. Justice Welch is a trained mediator and volunteered for many years with the West Michigan Dispute Resolution Center.

Justice Welch received her law degree from Ohio State University, where she served as research editor of the *Law Journal* and graduated from Penn State University with honors *magna cum laude* in 1992. After law school, she practiced labor/employment law at large law firms located in Louisville, KY and Grand Rapids, MI prior to starting her own law practice. She also published many articles in academic and industry publications, including serving as a Chapter Editor for *The Developing Labor Law* treatise.

Justice Welch served as a Trustee for the Grand Rapids Bar Association and is a past board member for the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan-Western Region (where she also served as President).

Justice Welch is currently vice president of the Steelcase Foundation and a trustee of the Grand Valley University Foundation (where she serves on the nominating committee). She has served on the boards of numerous nonprofit organizations.

Justice Welch devoted a large amount of her time the past 15 years to public education advocacy in Michigan. Beyond having served as Vice President and a Trustee on the East Grand Rapids Public Schools Board of Education, she worked with leaders across the state to engage and train community members to be advocates for local public schools and regularly worked with legislators on public school policy and legislation. She also served on the School Finance Research Collaborative (a statewide coalition of education stakeholders who commissioned a study to determine the true cost of educating a child in Michigan).

Justice Welch served on the Grand Rapids Mayor's Task Force in 2013 and 2016, which was charged with examining and improving local elections, and oversaw large-scale voter protection efforts in West Michigan in 2016 and 2018.

Justice Welch was recognized as a Grand Rapids Business Journal "40 Under 40" Business Leader (2009) and received the Women Lawyers Association-Western Region's Outstanding Member Award. She has received several awards in recognition for her public school, conservation, and other community work.

Justice Welch and her husband Brian Schwartz have four adult children. Their oldest son is a graduate of the United States Air Force Academy and their other three children are all in college.



JUSTICE
BRIAN K. ZAHRA

Term expires January 1, 2023

Justice Brian K. Zahra was appointed by Governor Rick Snyder to the Michigan Supreme Court on January 14, 2011. The people of Michigan subsequently elected him in November 2012 to a partial term and then reelected him in November 2014 to a full term.

Justice Zahra received his undergraduate degree in 1984 from Wayne State University. To finance his education, he opened and operated a small health and personal care retail store in downtown Detroit. Justice Zahra later opened a grocery outlet, also in Detroit, with two partners. In 1987, he graduated with honors from the University Of Detroit School Of Law, where he served as a member of the Law Review and as Articles Editor of the State Bar of Michigan's *Corporation and Finance Business Law Journal*. Upon graduation, he served as law clerk to Judge Lawrence P. Zatkoff of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, before joining and eventually becoming a partner in the law firm of Dickinson, Wright, Moon, Van Dusen & Freeman. In 1994, Governor John M. Engler appointed him to the Wayne County Circuit Court where in 1996 he was elected to a 6-year term. In December of 1998, he was appointed to the Michigan Court of Appeals by Governor John M. Engler. He was elected to 6-year terms in 2000 and 2006. From December 2005 to January 2007, he served as the Court of Appeals' Chief Judge Pro Tem.

Justice Zahra has served on many professional and legislative committees, including the Michigan Civil Jury Instructions Committee, the Circuit Court Appellate Rules Committee, the Domestic Violence Legislation Implementation Task Force, and the advisory committee for the Michigan Judicial Institute Domestic Violence Benchbook. Justice Zahra also served on the Michigan Board of Law Examiners, which drafts and grades the examination that law school graduates must pass in order to become licensed attorneys. He is currently a Senior Fellow of Law and Public Policy at the University of Michigan-Dearborn campus, as well as a Distinguished Fellow at Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Michigan. He previously served on the adjunct faculty at the University of Detroit-Mercy Law School.

Justice Zahra has been active in many civic and charitable organizations, including Boys and Girls Clubs of Southeastern Michigan, Kiwanis Club International, Leadership Detroit, the Knights of Columbus, the Maltese American Community Club, and the Maltese American Benevolent Society, of which he is a past officer. He is a former board member and officer of the Catholic Lawyers Society, and past officer of the Federalist Society, where he currently serves as a member of the advisory board to the Michigan chapter.

Justice Zahra resides in Northville Township with his wife, Suzanne, and their two children.