

Ingham County Bar Association BRIEFS



September 2025

Upcoming Events, Page 2 | President's Message, Page 4



Welcome new ICBA President, Alexander S. Rusek

Contents

President’s Message	4	Artificial Intelligence Bias: Is my AI biased, racist, misogynistic, and homophobic?.....	17
Young Lawyers.....	6	ICBA Q&A Staff	20
ICBA Q&A Leaders	7	Park Profile.....	23
Inclusivity: A Love Letter to My Grandparents	11	Ask A Lawyer Event	25
Annual President’s Award	13	The Heart of Animal Welfare in Lansing	26
Essential Tool in Your Attorney Toolbox	14	Past Presidents of the ICBA	28
Section Chairs	16	NALA Press Release	29

SAVE
THE
DATE

131st Annual Dinner
Wednesday, November 12, 2025
Crowne Plaza @ 6:00 – 8:00 pm

ICBF Fellows Reception
Wednesday, November 12, 2025
Crowne Plaza @ 5:00 – 6:00 pm

Meet the Judges
Thursday, January 8, 2026
U Club @ 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Bench Bar 2026
Saturday, February 28, 2026
Veterans Memorial Courthouse

17th Annual Barristers
Thursday, March 12, 2026
U Club @ 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

BRIEFS
Publication Schedule

September
December
March
June



@inghamcountybarassociation



@inghambar



@ICBALawyers



linkedin.com/company/ingham-county-bar-association



ICBA Logo and Letterhead Policy

The ICBA has adopted a policy regarding the use of the ICBA logo and letterhead. If you are currently using or are planning to use the ICBA logo, we ask that you become familiar with and abide by the revised policy. You can read the full policy [here](#).

About ICBA

Founded in 1895, the Ingham County Bar Association continues its longstanding tradition of service to the legal profession and the greater Lansing community, bringing lawyers together to join in a strong organization that works to achieve objectives that transcend the individual.



INGHAM COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 66
Grand Ledge, MI 48837
www.inghambar.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President

Alexander Rusek
Foster Swift Collins & Smith PC

President Elect

Jessica Zimbelman
State Appellate Defender Office

Vice President

Mary Bowen
Michigan Attorney Grievance Commission

Treasurer

Nolan Erickson
Grewal Law PLLCn

Secretary

Catherine Tucker
Sinan, Dramis, Larkin, Graves & Waldman, P.C.

Immediate Past President

Lindsay Dangel
Murphy & Spagnuolo PC

Jordan Ahlers-Smith
Speaker Law

Tiffany DeBruin
DeBruin Law PLLC

Logan Byrne
Byrne Law, PLLC

Theodore Seitz
Dykema Gossett PLLC

Chris Wickman
Nichols Law Firm

Kristina Bilowus
MSU College of Law

John Dewane
Ingham County Prosecutor

SECTION CHAIRS

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

Jenna Ribbons
Signature Solutions

Gabrielle Lawrence
Foster Swift

Criminal Defense Law

Marisa Vinsky
Chartier & Nyamfukudza, PLC

Chris Wickman
Nichols Law Firm, PLLC

Employment & Labor Law

Kelly McClintock
Blanchard & Walker PLLC

Family Law

Jessica Larson
Mallory, Lapka Scott & Selin PLLC

Nicole Samuel
Samuel Law, PC

Paralegal/Legal Assistant

Megan L. Cochrane
Foster Swift Collins & Smith PC

Emily Erbisch
O'Keefe Law, PLLC

Probate & Trust Law

Ernsie Augustin
Augustin Law Offices

Real Estate Law

William D. Tomblin
William D. Tomblin & Associates

Ellen E. Ward
Oade Stroud & Kleiman PC

Mitchell Zolton
Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes PLC

Young Lawyers

Logan Byrne
Byrne Law, PLLC

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Annual Dinner

Theodore Seitz / Jessica Zimbelman

Annual Meeting

Alex Rusek / Michael Van Huysse / John Fraser

Ask A Lawyer Committee

Raymond Harris / Brandon Schumacher

Awards

Kristina Bilowus / John Dewane / Jackie Dupler

DEI

Kristina Bilowus / Jackie Dupler

Education

Chris Wickman / Catherine Tucker

Meet the Judges

Nolan Erickson / Tiffany DeBruin

Membership

Mary Bowen / Catherine Tucker

Nominating Committee

Lindsay Dangel / John Dewane

Past Presidents'

Lindsay Dangel

Section Chair Liason

Jessica Zimbelman / Chris Wickman

Shrimp Dinner

Alex Rusek / Michael Van Huysse / John Fraser

Social Deliberations

Kristina Bilowus / Tiffany DeBruin

Social Media

Tiffany DeBruin / Jackie Dupler

Sponsors

Katie Tucker / Alex Rusek

Wellness Committee

Chris Wickman / Jackie Dupler

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Madelyne Lawry
517-627-3938

President's Message

Looking forward to the 2025-2026 ICBA year



Alexander S. Rusek,
Foster Swift
arusek@fosterswift.com

As I step into the role of President of the Ingham County Bar Association, I am deeply honored to follow in the footsteps of my predecessors and grateful for this opportunity to serve our legal community. My path to this privilege has been rooted in my commitment to justice and underscored by firsthand recognition of the well-being challenges faced by attorneys in today's demanding and continuously evolving practice of law.

This year, I pledge to shepherd the Ingham County Bar Association forward by focusing on three primary areas: (1) Attorney wellness; (2) Community service; and (3) The long-term viability and stability of the Ingham County Bar Association.

We know that attorneys experience heightened stress, burnout, and mental health challenges. Studies have also shown that one out of every three attorneys in the United States abuse alcohol;¹ that alcohol addiction affected close to half of all attorneys while in law school or the early years of their careers;² that 21% of working lawyers are considered "problem drinkers;"³ that nearly one in ten attorneys abuse prescription drugs; that 35% of attorneys have suffered from depression;⁴ that attorneys are 3.6 times more likely to have an incident of depression than the general population;⁵ that attorneys rank

5th in occupational suicide rates in the United States; and that, according to a 1997 study, suicide accounted for over 10% of all attorney deaths.⁶

Not addressing these issues is not a luxury, but a professional imperative.

National initiatives such as *Well-Being Week in Law* (celebrated May 4-8, 2026) have highlighted the importance of a holistic approach to wellness—covering physical, emotional, social, and spiritual health. As such, the Ingham County Bar Association will be expanding our resources available for attorneys that may be experiencing or assisting others with mental health issues, physical health issues, substance abuse, burnout, discrimination, imposter syndrome, and other areas of wellness. Our wellness initiatives this year will be informed and cognizant of our commitment to our diverse membership and community. Additionally, I hope to foster relationships and offer these resources to local affinity bar associations and law schools. These efforts align with the broader legal profession's move toward sustainable, humane practice. Former Missouri Bar President Shelly Dreyer has written that "We can't take care of our clients if we don't take care of ourselves." I believe the same holds true in Ingham County.⁷

Law practice is most meaningful when we extend beyond our offices. Continuing the Ingham County Bar Association's tradition of service to the community at-large, the Ingham County Bar Association will be partnering with the Capital Area Humane Society this year. We are looking forward to a synergistic philanthropic relationship with the humane society that will allow both organizations to expand their reach in our community. In addition to this partnership, the Ingham County Bar Association will once again host its annual Ask a Lawyer events directly benefiting members of our community.

Finally, the long-term stability of the organization will be a major focus of our efforts this year. I recognize that none of these ambitions will come to fruition without the collective energy and support of our membership. You, our members, are the source of our vitality, ingenuity, and moral center. I invite your ideas, your passion, and your participation in this shared journey. This year, let us redefine success, not just by docket or verdict, but in measurable improvements in wellbeing, community connection, and access to justice. If you are moved to help shape these efforts, whether through planning committees, community partnerships, event hosting, or mentorship, I warmly welcome you to reach out.

We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming signature events:

Annual Dinner: November 12, 2025 at 6:00 pm

Top 5 Under 35: Presented at the 17th Annual Barristers on March 12, 2026

Bench Bar: February 28, 2026 at 12:30 pm

Meet the Judges: January 8, 2026 at 6:00 pm

Annual Meeting and Shrimp Dinner:

May 20, 2026 at 5:00 pm

Endnotes

- 1 See <https://www.addictions.com/blog/silent-suffering-in-the-courtroom-lawyers-substance-abuse/> (last accessed August 14, 2025).
- 2 *Id.*
- 3 See <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4736291/> (last accessed August 14, 2025).
- 4 See <https://www.onelegal.com/blog/lawyer-depression-in-the-legal-profession-know-when-to-seek-help/#:~:text=Impact%20of%20lawyer%20depression%20on,productivity%2C%20and%20healthcare%20expenses%E2%80%8B> (last accessed August 14, 2025).
- 5 *Id.*
- 6 See <https://www.moorecountync.gov/DocumentCenter/View/437/How-I-Almost-Became-Another-Lawyer-Who-Killed-Himself-PDF?bidId=> (last accessed August 14, 2025).
- 7 Dreyer, S. President's page: From stigma to support-building a healthier legal profession. Missouri Bar Journal, Vol. 81, No. 2 / March-April 2025; available at <https://news.mobar.org/presidents-page-from-stigma-to-support--building-a-healthier-legal-profession/> (last accessed August 14, 2025).

Bio for this Article:

Alexander S. Rusek is a Shareholder with Foster, Swift, Collins & Smith, P.C. in Lansing, Michigan and an adjunct professor of law with the Michigan State University College of Law where he teaches trial advocacy courses in the college's Trial Practice Institute. Mr. Rusek's practice focuses on complex mass action and class action civil litigation, business law & litigation, criminal law, government relations, and appellate law. [Read more about Alex here.](#)

Join us in recognizing:

August 2025: National Black Business Month
August 26, 2025: Women's Equality Day
September 2025: National Recovery Month
September 7-13, 2025: National Suicide Prevention Week
September: National Suicide Prevention Month
September 6-12, 2025: National Suicide Prevention Week
September 10, 2025: World Suicide Prevention Day
September 15, 2025-October 15, 2025: National Hispanic Heritage Month
October 2025: Global Diversity Awareness Month
October 2025: LGBTQ+ History Month
October 2025: National Disability Employment Awareness Month
October 2025: National Substance Abuse Prevention Month
October 2025: National Depression and Mental Health Screening Month
October 4-10, 2025: Mental Illness Awareness Week
October 8, 2025: National Depression Screening Day
October 10, 2025: World Mental Health Day
October 13, 2025: Indigenous People's Day
November 2025: National Native American Heritage Month
November 6, 2025: International Stress Awareness Day
November 13, 2025: World Kindness Day
November 16, 2025: International Day of Tolerance
December 2025: Human Rights Day
December 3, 2025: International Day of Persons with Disabilities
December 10, 2025: International Humans Rights Day
January 19, 2026: MLK, Jr. Day
January 27, 2026: International Holocaust Remembrance Day
February 2026: Black History Month
February 16-23, 2026: Random Acts of Kindness Week
March 2026: Self-Injury Awareness Month
March 2026: International Women's History Month
March 2026: Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month
March 8, 2026: International Women's Day
March 21, 2026: International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination:
April 2026: Alcohol Awareness Month
April 2026: National Counseling Awareness Month
April 2026: National Minority Health Month
April 9, 2026: National Alcohol Screening Day
April 22, 2026: Earth Day
May 2026: Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month
May 2026: Mental Health Awareness Month
May 6-12, 2026: National Mental Health Counseling Week
May 11-17, 2026: National Prevention Week
May 17, 2026: International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia ("IDAHOBIT")
June 2026: Pride Month
June 19, 2026: Juneteenth
June 27, 2026: PTSD Awareness Day
July 2026: Minority Mental Health Awareness Month



ICBA-YLS

Young Lawyers Updates

2025 Paper Chase 5K

The Ingham County Bar Association Young Lawyers Section hosted its 10th Annual Paper Chase 5K on June 22, 2025. The race is a great opportunity for members of the legal community to connect outside of work and build lasting friendships. Everyone who attended enjoyed spending time with colleagues and others in the community.

This year's 5K was held at Lansing Shuffle. Participants received a gift card to enjoy food or drinks there after the race. Additionally, medals were awarded to the top three men and the top three women with the fastest times.

Although the day of the race was hot, sunny, and humid, there was a strong turnout. Not only did the event raise funds for the Young Lawyers Section to host future activities, but a portion of the proceeds also benefited Big Brothers Big Sisters Michigan Capital Region.

We could not have achieved such success without our generous sponsors, thank you!

We look forward to making next year's race bigger and better than ever. See you there!



ICBA Membership Scholarship Application

ICBA may offer scholarships to prospective members who may be experiencing a hardship and cannot pay the standard rates to be an active member of the Bar.

Recipients will remain anonymous. It is up to the discretion of the ICBA President to grant scholarships, but it can only be approved on an annual basis (i.e. this is not a benefit that automatically renews year-to-year).

The scholarship application can be accessed [here](#).

Q & A

ICBA Get to Know Your Leaders

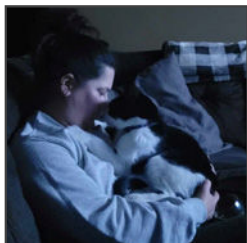


Kristina Bilowus
Board Member
bilowusk@msu.edu

What was the name of your first pet?
Che-che

What type of pet was it, and what was their personality like?
She was a poodle mix and she was playful, loving, and my first friend!

Did your pet have any funny habits or tricks?
So the story goes, she was very protective of me as a baby and often would try to encourage me to walk around the living room with her.



What's one lesson your pet taught you that you still carry today?
That pets are part of the family and never underestimate their love and loyalty.

If your pet could have given you a piece of advice, what would it have been?
Small can be mighty!

What would be your pet's job title if they worked in your organization?
The CEO :)

Are you currently a pet owner? Tell us about them!
Yes! Two adorable kitties - Penny and Nickel.

If you could be any animal for a day, what would you choose?
Cheetah - I would be so fast and active!

Favorite memory involving a pet?
Bringing Nickel home from the animal shelter - I may have bought too many items at the pet shop. One word to describe your bond with your pet.

One word to describe your bond with your pet.
Love



Mary A. Bowen
Vice President
marybowenesq@att.net

What was the name of your first pet?
Fuzzball

What type of pet was it, and what was their personality like?
Fuzzball was a black cat. He was smart, mischievous and curious.

If your pet could have given you a piece of advice, what would it have been?
Take naps often. Rest is a necessity, not an option.

One word to describe your bond with your pet.
Loveable



Logan Byrne
Board Member
info@byrnelaw.org

What was the name of your first pet? Lizzy

What type of pet was it, and what was their personality like?

Lizzy was a Shetland Sheepdog. She was very high energy.

Did your pet have any funny habits or tricks?

Lizzy was trained to do agility. She was also a very nervous dog and would bark at her own reflection.

What's one lesson your pet taught you that you still carry today?

Patience

If your pet could have given you a piece of advice, what would it have been?

Lizzy was high energy and loved to play fetch, so she would probably remind me to have fun and not work so much.

What would be your pet's job title if they worked in your organization?

Receptionist

Are you currently a pet owner?

Tell us about them!

Yes, I have another dog named Oliver. He is Black Lab/German Shepard mix.

If you could be any animal for a day, what would you choose?

A dog because they have a stress-free life.

Favorite memory involving a pet?

Not sure, I grew up on a farm and the family always had dogs, so there are a lot of fond memories with pets.

One word to describe your bond with your pet.

Unconditional



Tiffany DeBruin
Board Member
tdebruin@debruinlegal.com

What was the name of your first pet? Mittens

What type of pet was it, and what was their personality like?

Cat, and it depended on her mood. She could be extremely lovey or want nothing to do with anyone.

What's one lesson your pet taught you that you still carry today?

To love unconditionally, when she felt like it.

What would be your pet's job title if they worked in your organization?

VP of passive-aggressive oversight - judging everyone silently from the top of the filing cabinet.



Alexander S. Rusek
President
alexrusek@gmail.com

What was the name of your first pet?

As best as I remember, Bogey was my first pet as a kid.

What type of pet was it, and what was their personality like?

Bogey was a black cat with a mean streak with anyone else but me!

What's one lesson your pet taught you that you still carry today?

Take more naps!

"A good leader is a person who takes a little more than his share of the blame and a little less than his share of the credit." – John Maxwell



Ted Seitz
Board Member
tseitz@dykema.com

What was the name of your first pet?
Hubba Bubba

What would be your pet's job title if they worked in your organization?
Sunshine Committee Chair

Are you currently a pet owner? Tell us about them!

Yes. I currently have a 8 year old Newfoundland Dog named Gus. He loves to sleep, go for walks, and eat cele

If you could be any animal for a day, what would you choose?
A dog because they have a stress-free life.

One word to describe your bond with your pet.
He is a member the family, who is always there for love and support



Bill Tomblin
Co-Chairperson of the Real Estate Law Section
wdtomblaw@aol.com

What would be your pet's job title if they worked in your organization?
They who rule my life!

Are you currently a pet owner? Tell us about them!
No

If you could be any animal for a day, what would you choose?
Eagle

Favorite memory involving a pet?
I dated a woman who had an English Bulldog. It was literally the funniest dog, ever! It would always greet me at the door with what was almost like a dance, jumping around on its back legs.

One word to describe your bond with your pet.
Unconditional



Ellen Ward
Co-Chair of the Real Estate Section
eward@osklaw.com

What was the name of your first pet? Molly

Did your pet have any funny habits or tricks?
She was incredibly fast and like to race boats and cars.

What's one lesson your pet taught you that you still carry today?
There is nothing like a great run!

What would be your pet's job title if they worked in your organization?
Race Pacer

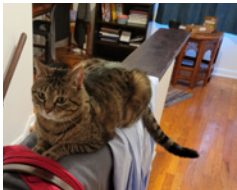
"If your actions create a legacy that inspires others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, then, you are an excellent leader." - Dolly Parton



Chris Wickman
Director and Criminal Defense
Law Section Co
cwickman@nicholslaw.net

What was the name of your first pet?

I've had cats all my life, but I've also had a few dogs. I currently have two cats and one part-time dog that I watch whenever my ex is going out of town.

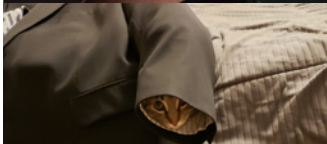


Are you currently a pet owner?

Tell us about them!

My wife and I currently have two cats. Penelope (Penny) is 7 and Nickel is 5. Penny is very affectionate, but only with

us and generally avoid strangers. Nickel has never met a lap that wasn't made for him. When we work from home, the best you can do is hope he's only on the desk with you, but more often he will attach to our chest and dead drop so we have to hold him up in our arms. Zoom is also fun - because why would we talk to other people instead of him. He needs to be seen and heard. Penny is happy to have Nickel around only so that she can be sly about causing mischief and we just blame him. She loves bedtime so she can cuddle us and get hours of pets.



If you could be any animal for a day, what would you choose?

Monkey. Agile and strong swinging and jumping through the air, playful, and silly.



Jessica Zimbelman
President-Elect
jzimbelman@sado.org

What was the name of your first pet?

This wasn't my first pet, but one of the most memorable pets from my childhood was Rudy the cat.

What type of pet was it, and what was their personality like?

Rudy was a tomcat, and truly seemed to live into the legend that cats have 9 lives. We lived in the country and Rudy would often disappear for days at a time, but he would always come home. Sometimes we'd see him prowling around town - I pictured him as the mayor, and he was going door-to-door to check in on his cat constituents. He was adventurous and independent, but at his heart, a homebody.

If you could be any animal for a day, what would you choose?

I would be a turtle. Specifically, I would be a turtle that lives in the pond of my childhood home in the country. It seems like a great life, to live slowly and sit on a rock in the sun. It's also a good lesson for me if I start to move too fast at work - take a beat, slow down, and live like a turtle. (Which to me means find a good book and head to Lake Michigan to read in the sun!)

Favorite memory involving a pet?

My favorite memory of a pet is when our beloved beagle Toookie had several litters of "lemon" beagles. They were so adorable, and surprising! Looked just like a beagle, but their coats were yellow and white.



"True leadership lies in guiding others to success. In ensuring that everyone is performing at their best, doing the work they are pledged to do and doing it well." – Bill Owens

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader." – John Quincy Adams

"You have to be burning with an idea, or a problem, or a wrong that you want to right. If you're not passionate enough from the start, you'll never stick it out." – Steve Jobs

Inclusivity: A love Letter to my Grandparents

By Kristina Bilowus

The views expressed in this article are written as the author's personal opinion and do not necessarily reflect the views of the ICBA, nor are they tied to any of the author's professional affiliations.



Kristina Bilowus
bilowusk@msu.edu

I write this article in my personal capacity and this article expresses solely my personal opinion and does not necessarily reflect the views of the ICBA, or any other professional organization that I am affiliated with.

As the proud granddaughter of four immigrants, I grew up with a lot of stories about “the old country” as well as trying to find the “American dream.” As my generation was one caught between old and new ways, I saw the give and take between stories that alternated between fabled lessons, mixed metaphors, and sayings as a way that my family used to navigate being caught in two different worlds. There was the general idea that if you worked hard enough, your efforts would be seen and rewarded.

Like so many others, the American dream was what propelled them to immigrate to the United States. Seen

like its own version of the promised land, the American dream has become akin to fabled stories, almost mythical. Not uncommon for immigrants of my grandparents’ generation, their last names became simplified upon crossing into Ellis Island, even to the extent their last names became unrecognizable from their former selves. As English was not the primary language spoken in any of their households, education was a burden and a gift.

Given westernized first names, modified last names, and a new language, education was seen as the gateway to a new life in the US. However, the majority of my maternal side dropped out of school before or at the eighth-grade level to pursue employment specifically in the coal mines of Pennsylvania (the boys) and the girls became housekeepers and nannies. On that side of the family, education was no longer the gateway, but rather a luxury that could no longer be afforded. My paternal side was luckier. Escaping war-torn Europe in the 1940’s, both my grandparents had formal education, prior to immigrating. While my grandfather’s legal skills were no longer transferrable in the new country, he found work as a bookkeeper. And my grandmother found work in a women’s clothing store.

Both sets of grandparents instilled in my parents a priority in learning and the importance of education. In return, my parents handed that lesson down to me,

which instilled a passion for learning and school. Moreover, they taught me to work hard, never expect a handout, and be grateful for what you do have. I acknowledge that my storyline is one of privilege. I benefited from the burden and hard work that my family undertook. All in all, I grew up with much comfort and consider myself lucky.

For many others, their narrative encompasses challenges I never dreamed of, let alone faced. Even looking to the trials of my immigrant grandparents and relatives, they were fortunate. Primarily European, Caucasian, and Christian, they were untouched by many forms of severe bigotry. Economically and educationally speaking, they faced less privilege but still escaped many forms of oppression. And ultimately, I am the product of their sacrifices and burdens carried.

Recently, I have been thinking about my family, those that sacrificed and are no longer in this world. As an individual who does not have children (though I do have my fur babies), I have wondered how to honor their legacy. And more importantly, how can I repay them for their challenges that I ultimately benefited from?

The answer is both simple and complex. Being pragmatic and realistic, there is nothing I can do to alter the past of my ancestors. Their sacrifice became my gain. Their challenges were something I

never had to face. And yet, I owe them so much. I have experienced education, privilege, community, and so much more. How do I pay that forward?

For me, I can honor their legacy in making a choice every day to be inclusive. This can take form in various ways, but starts with the following:

- I believe, more than ever, this is the time to be vigilantly intentional to make sure others have seats at the proverbial table.
- I will look for opportunities to uplift others.
- I can be creative with solutions to better address the concerns and needs of my students.
- Speak inclusively.
- Be engaged in my communities outside the legal field – where are resources needed?

Moreover, while this article enabled me to share part of my narrative, it is not my story

alone. For many of us, we are the children, grandchildren, or even further generations, of immigrants. For other members of our audience, we may have directly immigrated and forged our own paths, without the benefit of others coming beforehand.

Immigration, as a topic, has been politicized and weaponized. My intention is for neither; rather, I offer this brief piece as one for reflection. How you choose to perceive immigration is your choice. However, I know that others and I would not be thriving in the US, but for our ancestors. Unless, we are Indigenous American, we most likely immigrated from elsewhere.1 Every journey is un que, every story

is different. I encourage us to reflect on our own narratives – the challenges and successes. And in so doing, we acknowledge those who helped us on our way, and those who hindered. And perhaps through this self-reflection we can strive to pose this question to ourselves:

“What can I do to be more inclusive toward others?”

If I keep this in mind, I believe I can honor my grandparents’ memory a little bit, every day.

Endnotes

- 1 *Teaching & Learning About Native Americans*, <https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/faq/did-you-know>, last accessed Aug. 25, 2025. When possible, refer with specificity to a tribe, or ask for personal preference. Generally speaking, “American Indian or Indigenous American are preferred by many Native people,” rather than using the term “Native American.”



**THANK YOU TO ALL THE SPONSORS OF THE
20TH ICBF MEMORIAL GOLF CLASSIC**

YOUR GENEROSITY IS GREATLY APPRECIATED!

GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
Sinas Dramis Law Firm	Sutton Advisors PLC	Foster Swift Collins & Smith

HOLE SPONSORS
54B District Court
Grewal Law PLLC
Paramount Coffee Company
R. Vincent Green & Associates
Speaker Law Firm PLLC



inghambar.org

ICBA MEMBER DIRECTORY
Are you listed in the [online member directory?](#)

Hon. Shauna Dunnings tells why
you should be an ICBA Member

[CLICK HERE](#)



Member Directory

Search Members
Search by last name only

2025 Annual President's Award Recipient



2025 – Tiffany DeBruin, DeBruin Law PLLC

Award Recipients History:

2016 – Jessica S. Fox, Nolan Thomsen & Villas, PC

2017 – James L. Dalton, Willingham Cote`

2018 – Sandra J. Lake, Hall Matson, PLC

2019 – Madelyne C. Lawry, ICBA, Executive Director

2020 – Pamela Amato, Mallory Lapka Scott & Selin, PLLC

2021 – Charles E. Barbieri Foster Swift Collins & Smith PC

2022 – Lindsay N. Dangl, Murphy & Spagnuolo PC

2023 – Ernschie Augustin, Augustin Law Offices, PLLC

Alexander Rusek, Foster Swift Collins & Smith PC

2024 – Christopher Wickman, Nichols Law Firm, PLLC

Firm at the time of receiving the award

Lawyer Referral Application

Please take note that the Ingham County Bar Association does not do Lawyer Referrals. If you need to use this service provided by the State Bar of Michigan, please call them at [\(800\) 968-0738](tel:8009680738) between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, to speak with a lawyer referral representative or you can use the links below.

- [Lawyer Referral and Information Service Registration Form](#)
- [LRIS Quick Reference Guide](#)
- [Become a Lawyer Referral Service Panel Member](#)



Essential Tool in Your Attorney Toolbox: Compassion

By Chris Wickman



Chris Wickman
cwickman@nicholslaw.net

“Law would be so easy without all the people.” It’s an adage I’ve heard too often – because I’m usually the one saying it. It’s true though – clients, witnesses, opposing parties and counsel, judges, and even I – we all often make my practice more difficult – and I’d imagine it’s true for you too if you’re being honest with yourself. It’s true because we are all human. We all have our own motivations and our own trauma. Our own pressure points and our own triggers. The ups and downs of life are happening to all of us while we are bumping into each other just trying to make our way through our days.

For clients, witnesses, and opposing parties, talking to lawyers are among the worst days of their lives – possibly only made worse by the potential of having to go to court. I often ask them how they’re doing and the most honest answers are, “Could be better.” My response is usually, “I understand.” No one ever calls lawyers to say, “I’m having a good

day, and I figured you have a stressful job and would just appreciate hearing that someone’s doing well.” I do not take it lightly that when I call clients (or opposing counsel), I may ruin their day. I’m a reminder of all that they’re going through and the stressors that come with it.

For opposing counsel and myself, we both have clients or interested parties pulling us in opposite directions. They’re upset. They’re emotional. They feel wronged. We are oftentimes the only people that they can really ever fully open up to who (close to) fully understand what they’re going through. Their trauma and their experiences become ours and smiling, laughing, joking, or showing courtesy to others sometimes feels wrong when we’re going through what they are.

Good judges – including the best judges – want to do the right thing. Sometimes they cannot under the law and that’s frustrating. The very thing that they are oftentimes the face of – the law – is sometimes unfair or broken – and people suffer as a result. Even when the law does favor the right thing, someone is generally upset. That person got their day in court, but the law or facts do not favor them, and it feels unfair. They’re upset and that is directed at the judge. Judges may wish more than anything that they can snap their fingers and undo what has been done – but they cannot. Judges oftentimes can also be isolated from others in the

legal profession because they have to maintain proper ethical boundaries from those who may appear in front of them – mentees, mentors, and even friends in the profession – who they previously embraced. Being in public is oftentimes a risk to being confronted by someone just feeling their emotions – whether it’s at an event or a grocery store. All of this may add to the isolation. All for doing their job – and it often comes without a “Thank you” that does not upset someone else.

My answer to all the people in the practice of law is to try to extend compassion to all to the best of my ability. Compassion turns down the heat and turns up the warmth. Everyone has the right to feel their feelings – even if I disagree with them, they aren’t rational, or are self-inflicted. Recognize they are bringing such to the table and have compassion. That does not mean pulling punches – just understand that it does not need to be worse than it is. I will question an adverse witness strategically (and often aggressively) every time, but I do not need to add extra pain to what they are going through. My compassion for the person and the process shows to a jury, to the judge, to opposing counsel, and oftentimes to the person being extended compassion. They may be lying (or telling the truth), but they also likely have been through a lot. Life too, may have treated them unfairly, same as my client or me.

Turning down the heat works just as well on my client – who like the opposing party is human and has made mistakes in life. Do not demonize the other person – a fellow human who has made mistakes. I oftentimes find opposing counsel errs when they demonize my client – as if my client and their client or other interested party aren't cut from the same human tapestry and, until recently, were oftentimes good friends, family, or lovers. When you preach hatred, it's easy to become hatred and you ruin your own day (and possibly all your days). It makes it easier to resolve matters and reach agreement when you have not inflamed your client or yourself unnecessarily against the other side and vice versa. Don't make your job harder on yourself. It also helps you pick and choose your battles more wisely and avoid charging emotionally in on something that doesn't matter. If anything, being compassionate helps you fight harder for your client. Fighting hard in court is not viewed by others as just being a rectum like always – because you're otherwise compassionate and personable. Your passion shows you do your job well and that this is important. If you need to be a rectum to get your way in court or make your point, you're not very good at your job. You probably make the results worse for your clients than better.

Being compassionate also helps when you need a bit of grace yourself. You too are human and make mistakes, life happens to you, and you sometimes let emotions affect you and you sometimes have bad days. When you need an adjournment or an extension or when you are inadvertently rude or overly passionate (or when your email is

attached to the opposing side's motions or in a police report), your ordinary compassion oftentimes will win the day. Life is hard and we don't need to make it harder on each other. Be the example and you're more likely to receive it in kind.

Some call what I describe as making the practice easier for one another as "civility" and maybe compassion is simply my approach to civility in the profession. I jokingly refer to civility as, "Why can't we be friends?" (with varying degrees of off-pitch and off-rhythm associated), but even if you cannot be friends (oftentimes because you don't want to be) with someone, show some compassion towards them. We may not be friends, but we are humans – and life is hard enough without us making it harder on each other. Your practice will benefit. Your clients will benefit. And you will benefit. People oftentimes make the practice of law harder, but they also are oftentimes why it is all worthwhile. And after all – nothing worth doing is easy. You will be remembered for the kind of person you are and the compassion you show for others. Make it a positive memory.

Bio for this Article:

Chris Wickman is a criminal defense attorney oftentimes representing humans accused of horrible things. He is too an imperfect human always working on employing as much zealous aggressive advocacy as compassion in his daily life. On the day he wrote this, he was returning from a client's remembrance of life. The client was human and lost too early in his mid-40s. The client was human and made mistakes, but at his remembrance, he was remembered for his positives and not his flaws – as we all hope for ourselves and our loved ones. He's also co-chair of the ICBA Wellness Committee with his partner Kristina Bilowus who helps him try to be a more compassionate person, by example, every day.



Apply Now for an ICBF Grant!

The Ingham County Bar Foundation is proud to support programs that promote access to justice, legal education, and community well-being. If your organization makes a difference in these areas, we encourage you to apply for an ICBF grant. Let us help bring your vision to life!

<https://www.inghambar.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/ICBF-Grant-Generic.pdf>

Deadline
December 31, 2025

Have Questions – email
janderton@fosterswift.com

ICBA Section Chairs

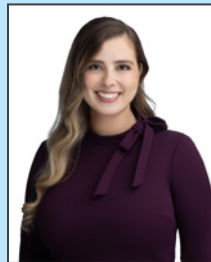
ADR Section

Jenna Ribbons/Gabrielle Lawrence



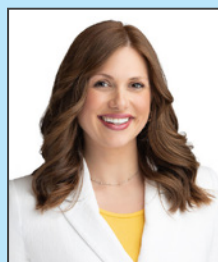
Criminal Defense Law

Marisa Vinsky / Chris Wickman



Employment/Labor Law

Kelly McClintock



Family Law

Jessica Larson/Nicole Samuel



Paralegal/Legal Assistant

Megan Cochrane / Emily A. Erbisch



Probate & Trust

Ernschie Augustin



Real Estate

Bill Tomblin / Ellen E. Ward / Mitchell Zolton



Artificial intelligence bias: Is my AI biased, racist, misogynistic, and homophobic?

By Alexander S. Rusek



Alexander S. Rusek
arusek@fosterswift.com

Alexander S. Rusek is a Shareholder with Foster, Swift, Collins & Smith, P.C. in Lansing, Michigan and an adjunct professor of law with the Michigan State University College of Law where he teaches trial advocacy courses in the college's Trial Practice Institute. Mr. Rusek's practice focuses on complex mass action and class action civil litigation, business law & litigation, criminal law, government relations, and appellate law. Mr. Rusek has represented established businesses, new businesses, non-profits, professionals, and individuals involved in multi-party, mass action, and class action litigation, notably representing over 100 survivors of sexual assault in the Michigan State University/Larry Nassar and University of Michigan/Robert Anderson litigations and a defendant in the Flint Water Crisis related civil and criminal litigations (all charges dismissed). Mr. Rusek is a graduate of Oakland University and the Michigan State University College of Law, cum laude.

In addition to his robust legal practice, Mr. Rusek is also a founder and board member of The Army of Survivors, Inc., board member of Highfields, Inc., board member of Downtown Lansing, Inc., board member of Downtown Lansing Partnership, Inc., board member of the Capital Area Humane Society, board member and President of the Ingham County Bar Association, board member of the State Bar of Michigan Civil Procedure & Courts Committee, board member of the State Bar of Michigan Litigation Section Governing Council, board member of the State Bar of Michigan Criminal Law Section Council, member of the WDMI Hillman Advocacy Program steering committee, Past-President of the Ingham County Bar Association Young Lawyers Section, Past-Chairperson of the Ingham County Board of Commissioners Equal Opportunity Committee, former Democratic Precinct Delegate for Lansing's Ward 1, Precinct 6, and a member of multiple local and national bar associations.

Mr. Rusek was recognized as a fellow with the Ingham County Bar Foundation in 2024 and is the recipient of the 2024 Shared Resources Super Volunteer Award, the 2023 Ingham County Bar Association's President's Special Recognition Award, a 2018 recipient of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce 10 Over the Next 10 Award, a 2018 recipient of Oakland University's Young Alumni 10 Within 10 Award,

and a 2016 recipient of the Ingham County Bar Association Top 5 Under 35 Award. He has authored multiple articles that have appeared in the State Bar of Michigan Journal and other State Bar of Michigan publications, American Bar Association publications, the Detroit Bar Association's Detroit Lawyer, the Ingham County Bar Association's BRIEFS, and others. Mr. Rusek was Mental Health First Aid USA certified in 2019 and seeks to incorporate trauma-informed principles into his practice every day.

Artificial intelligence: Is my AI racist, misogynistic, homophobic, and otherwise discriminatory?

As artificial intelligence ("AI") gains widespread adoption and use in the legal community, practitioners need to be aware of, and conscious of, the biases that may be lurking below the surface in the AI programs they use. This bias can surface in many ways, including instances of racism, misogyny, religious bias (such as islamophobia and antisemitism), and homophobia in the AI program's output. "As the stakes of the decisions entrusted to [AI] language models rise, so does the concern that they mirror or even amplify human biases encoded in the data they were trained on, thereby perpetuating discrimination against racialized, gendered and other minoritized social groups."¹

Broadly, the AI tools that practitioners are most familiar with can be described as large language models (“LLM”). “A large language model is a type of foundation model that is trained on massive quantities of text, and that can understand and generate natural-sounding language.¹ LLMs also can be trained to perform other tasks. To generate content, LLMs use contextual clues to calculate probabilities and predict the most likely next word in a sentence.”²

A recent opinion out of the Southern District of New York explains at a very high level how LLMs, like ChatGPT, are trained. “At the training stage, [the AI’s creators] first collect data, including [the New York Times’] works, and then they train their LLMs on that data through a process that feeds the data through the model. In particular, the collection stage (also known as the pre-training stage) involves collecting and storing a vast amount of content scraped from the internet, including content scraped from [the New York Times’] websites, and creating datasets from that content which are later used to train the LLMs. Examples of these training datasets include (1) WebText and WebText2—developed using millions of links posted by “users of the ‘Reddit’ social network”—which OpenAI built and used to train GPT-2 and GPT-3 according to [the New York Times]; and (2) Common Crawl, which is a “copy of the Internet” created by a third party. Plaintiffs allege that these datasets, among others used to train defendants’ GPT models, contain a “staggering” amount of scraped content from the [New York Times’] works, and that [the AI’s creators] have used and continue to use these and other training datasets

to train their GPT models.”³ The *New York Times* Court further explained that “The data that defendants collect at the pre-training stage and defendants’ LLMs train on at the training stage inform the responses of the LLMs to user queries at the output stage.”⁴ When an LLM is trained on discriminatory content, which there is no lack of on the internet, those biases in the underlying data can and will emerge in the AI’s output.

In recognition of this potential for bias, the American Bar Association’s Standing Committee on Ethics and Professional Responsibility recently released Formal Opinion 517, titled “Discrimination in the Jury Selection Process,” on July 9, 2025. This opinion offers crucial clarification on the application of Model Rule 8.4(g) to the exercise of peremptory challenges, a topic of significant importance in our daily practice.

At its core, Formal Opinion 517 reinforces that a lawyer who “knows or reasonably should know” that their use of peremptory challenges constitutes unlawful discrimination in jury selection violates Model Rule 8.4(g). This opinion is a direct response to the evolving legal landscape surrounding jury selection, particularly in light of the Supreme Court’s decisions, beginning with *Batson*,⁵ which prohibit discriminatory peremptory challenges based on race or gender.

Formal Opinion 517 sets forth that a “lawyer’s culpability may be raised when the lawyer relies on software in making decisions about jury selection. Suppose, for example, that a lawyer uses an artificial intelligence-assisted

program to rank prospective jurors and, unbeknownst to the lawyer, the program applies rankings in a manner that would constitute unlawful discrimination (e.g., based on the prospective jurors’ race or gender). It is conceivable that the lawyer could strike jurors for unlawfully discriminatory reasons, constituting purposeful discrimination in violation of *Batson*, even if the lawyer had no intention of doing so (for example, if the AI-assisted program also provided seemingly neutral reasons for rankings). Whether a lawyer “reasonably should know” that the peremptory challenges were impermissibly discriminatory will depend on the circumstances. In the context of an AI-assisted program, lawyers should conduct sufficient due diligence to acquire a general understanding of the methodology employed by the juror selection program. See ABA Formal Op. 512 (2024) (“lawyers should either acquire a reasonable understanding of the benefits and risks of the GAI tools that they employ in their practices or draw on the expertise of others who can provide guidance about the relevant GAI tool’s capabilities and limitations”).

Model Rule 8.4(g) broadly prohibits lawyers from engaging in “harassment or discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion, national origin, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status or socioeconomic status in conduct related to the practice of law.” However, it also contains important caveats, stating that it “does not limit the ability of a lawyer to accept, decline or withdraw from a representation in accordance with Rule 1.16,” and “does not preclude legitimate advice or advocacy consistent with these Rules.”

One of the primary questions addressed by Formal Opinion 517 is how to interpret “legitimate advocacy” in the context of peremptory challenges. The opinion unequivocally states that striking prospective jurors on discriminatory bases in violation of substantive law governing jury selection is **not legitimate advocacy**. ***If a lawyer’s conduct has been declared illegal by the courts or a legislature, it cannot be considered “legitimate.” This means that a Batson violation, for instance, is by definition unlawful discrimination and therefore not “legitimate” conduct under Rule 8.4(g).***

The opinion also delves into the “knows or reasonably should know” standard. This is a critical element, as a lawyer’s unlawful exercise of peremptory challenges only violates Rule 8.4(g) if this knowledge standard is met. “Knows” refers to actual knowledge, while “reasonably should know” means that “a lawyer of reasonable prudence and competence would ascertain the matter in question.” This places a significant duty on us as attorneys to be diligent in our understanding of the law and the implications of our actions during jury selection.

A particularly insightful section of the opinion addresses situations where a lawyer might defer to others’ judgment, such as a client’s directive or a jury consultant’s advice, or even guidance from AI programs. The opinion makes it clear that a lawyer cannot simply follow a client’s instruction or a consultant’s suggestion if they know or reasonably should know that doing so would result in unlawful juror discrimination. If a client or consultant explicitly states a discriminatory reason, the lawyer who acts on that

would be knowingly discriminating. Even if non-discriminatory reasons are offered, the “reasonably should know” standard imposes a duty of inquiry. If a reasonably competent and prudent lawyer would know that the stated reasons are pretextual and the proposed challenges are unlawful, then the lawyer **must** refrain from relying on that advice. This extends to the use of AI-assisted jury selection programs. Lawyers must conduct sufficient due diligence to understand the methodology of such programs to ensure they are not inadvertently engaging in unlawful discrimination.

In essence, Formal Opinion 517 serves as a vital reminder that our role as zealous advocates is always bounded by the law and ethical considerations. While we are tasked with representing

A LAWYER'S ETHICAL PATH FOR PEREMPTORY CHALLENGES
NAVIGATING YOUR ETHICAL OBLIGATIONS

Scenario 1: A lawyer cannot simply follow a client's, consultant's, or AI's recommendation if they know or reasonably should know it would result in unlawful discrimination.

Scenario 2: If a discriminatory reason is explicitly stated, a lawyer who acts on it is knowingly participating in discrimination.

Scenario 3: Even if neutral reasons are provided, the "reasonably should know" standard creates a duty of inquiry if a reasonably competent lawyer would suspect the reasons are pretext.

Conclusion: This responsibility extends to the use of AI; lawyers must understand these tools to avoid inadvertently engaging in unlawful discrimination.

our clients’ interests vigorously, we must never cross the line into unlawful discrimination. This opinion underscores the importance of our professional judgment, our duty of inquiry, and our commitment to upholding the integrity of the justice system in Michigan and beyond.

Formal Opinion 517 is available at: https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/professional_responsibility/ethics-opinions/aba-formal-opinion-517.pdf

Endnotes

- 1 Hofmann, V., Kalluri, P.R., Jurafsky, D. *et al.*, AI generates covertly racist decisions about people based on their dialect. *Nature* 633, 147–154 (2024); available at <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-024-07856-5> (last accessed August 14, 2025).
- 2 § 24:10. Terminology—Large Language Model (“LLM”), 3 Entertainment Law 3d: Legal Concepts and Business Practices § 24:10.
- 3 *New York Times Co v Microsoft Corp.*, 777 F Supp 3d 283, 300 (SDNY 2025) (internal citations omitted).
- 4 *Id.* at 300-301.
- 5 *Batson v Kentucky*, 476 US 79 (1986).

Thank You

Shaheen

for providing
the hole-in-one contest
for the

**2025 ICBF Memorial
Golf Classic**

INGHAM COUNTY

Q&A

ICBA Get to Know Your Staff



Madelyne C. Lawry
Executive Director
MLawry@inghambar.org

What was the name of your first pet?
Richard Hawkins

What type of pet was it, and what was their personality like?
Bichon Frise

Did your pet have any funny habits or tricks?
Richard had a job at the office - moral support and entertainment. He also had a bad habit of eating staff lunches and treats.



What's one lesson your pet taught you that you still carry today?
Slow down and have more fun. Don't take things too seriously. If your pet could have given you a piece of advice, what would it have been?

If your pet could have given you a piece of advice, what would it have been?
Same as above

What would be your pet's job title if they worked in your organization?
Moral Support

Are you currently a pet owner? Tell us about them!
No. I lost Richard Hawkins in 2023 - he was 13.

Favorite memory involving a pet?
Always happy to see me

One word to describe your bond with your pet. Joy



Barb Campbell
Administrative Assistant
barb@sharedresources.us

What was the name of your first pet?
Mr. Kitty



Ellery Curtis
Social Media Content Coordinator
support7@sharedresources.us

What was the name of your first pet?
Mr. Kitty

What type of pet was it, and what was their personality like?
He was an old orange cat with a big attitude. He had a soft spot for my dog, Roxie, but only gave love to whoever last fed him Friskies.

What's one lesson your pet taught you that you still carry today?
Love should be unconditional. I didn't love Mr. Kitty so that he would love me back. I just loved him because I should and to my 4 year-old self he was a funny grumpy cat.

If your pet could have given you a piece of advice, what would it have been?
Mr. Kitty's advice would be to take a nap.

ICBA Get to Know Your Staff continued



Owen Curtis
Project Manager
support6@sharedresources.us

What was the name of your first pet?
Roxie

What type of pet was it, and what was their personality like?
She was a dog and was super chill. She would let me climb all over her as a kid and draw on her with pens. Poor dog...

What's one lesson your pet taught you that you still carry today?
Being kind to people may make them like you more

What would be your pet's job title if they worked in your organization?
Emotional Support maybe



Matt Hinkle
Technology Supervisor
support4@sharedresources.us

What was the name of your first pet?
The first one I really remember is Onyx.

What type of pet was it, and what was their personality like?
He was a black lab, who was very energetic and playful. He made friends with everyone and loved attention and pets.

What's one lesson your pet taught you that you still carry today?
To love everyone - the world can be a dark place, and knowing at least one person loves you can make a huge difference.

If you could be any animal for a day, what would you choose?
An eagle. I really want to see the world from the sky.

One word to describe your bond with your pet.
Love



Gurleen Kaur
Graphic Designer
ggkaur21@gmail.com

Are you currently a pet owner? Tell us about them!
No

If you could be any animal for a day, what would you choose?
Cheetah

Favorite memory involving a pet?
My favorite memory involving a pet would be my cousin's dog. When we were younger, he would always follow us even if we tried to hide from him and would ruin our games. Now looking back at it, I think it is really funny.

One word to describe your bond with your pet.
Joy

"The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."
– Winston Churchill



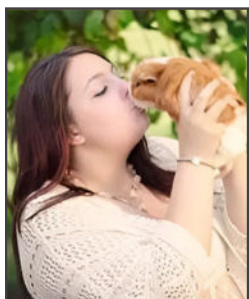
Kate Pojeta
Account Executive
kate@inghambar.org



Elli Wonch
Administrative Assistant
support2@sharedresources.us

What's one lesson your pet taught you that you still carry today?

I had a guinea pig named Georgie. She taught me that emotional support animals can come in any size!



Are you currently a pet owner? Tell us about them!

I have two cats. Brooke is nine, and Miss Penelope Whiskers (aka Penny) is two.

If you could be any animal for a day, what would you choose?

A giraffe!



COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

Capital Region Community Foundation

**Together, we can help
your clients achieve
their charitable goals.**

- Maximum charitable tax strategies
- Donor-advised funds are superior to commercial DAFs
- Endowment funds to suit your client's charitable intent, forever
- Legacy funds require no up-front gift
- Professional staff provide personalized service and community knowledge

Contact us to add Community Foundation experts to your team!

Laurie Strauss Baumer

President & CEO

lbaumer@ourcommunity.org

517-281-9054



ICBA Wellness Committee Park Profile

- Michigan State University Campus

By Chris Wickman



Chris Wickman
cwickman@nicholslaw.net

On behalf of the ICBA Wellness Committee, we are happy to continue our regular “Park Profiles” column showcasing one of Ingham County’s greatest resources – our public parks! Parks are great places to maintain or find your wellness whether it’s exercising, playing, socializing, or simply enjoying some quiet time. You can enjoy them with a partner, friends, children, a dog, or even find peace for yourself!

Our next “park” profiled will be one of my favorite places to enjoy a piece of nature in Ingham County – the campus of Michigan State University (MSU). Unlike many larger universities, MSU’s campus is largely self-contained. You enter campus and everything is largely campus until you’re back off campus again – from Hagadorn Road in the East to Harrison Road (plus Brody Complex) in the West and Grand River in the North to Mt. Hope Road (and actually much further!) in the South.



It has beautiful green spaces to toss a frisbee or picnic, courts to play sports, beautiful horticultural and botanical gardens, and varied architecture from the older West Circle to the more modern buildings like the Broad Art Museum (also known as Lex Luthor’s house in Batman v Superman) or the impressive Brody Cafeteria or newer residence halls. Additionally, the new multicultural center is a wonderful gathering and meeting space. It’s a great place to walk a friendly dog (especially around Finals when the students would love some canine affection) or enjoy a peaceful walk (barring tailgates, big athletic competitions, etc.) Of course, MSU is also known for its athletics which is also a wonderful time to be on campus.

My personal favorite MSU experiences are seeing Beaumont Tower in action. While itself beautiful, it is one of my best memories to be in Beaumont Tower while the carillon is being played. Those bells you hear on campus is a carillon – or a set of bells played via a modified keyboard/piano setup played by striking wooden pegs with your fists. The automated bells play the fight song or tones for regular intervals, but it is also a playable instrument that sometimes is played for concerts and may be toured during regular times. Throughout the summer, there are regular concerts, but there are also regular lunchtime concerts that you can enter and watch the bells being played. The first floor of the tour is the practice carillon and the stairs leading to the second floor (a lounge with couches) and third floor (where the magic happens with the actual instrument.) Depending on availability, you may be able to climb a final ladder and open the trap door to watch the actual bells being struck. It is undoubtedly one of the coolest experiences I’ve ever had to see the bells being played by real musicians. For community musicians, you can also take lessons and learn to play the carillon yourself (even if you only really played the coronet/trumpet and have to re-learn to read the bass clef). **The next concert after this is released is the October 30, 2025 “Halloween, Spooky Tunes for Carillon” concert at 9:00PM outside Beaumont Tower.** It should be a great event for adults and the family alike! I’d

also be remiss to not mention another favorite location of mine – the MSU Dairy Store. It recently won “Grand Champion” of the American Dairy Science Association’s 2025 Ice Cream Competition and really earns the title

with its homemade ice cream and other wares. – Chris.

More information about MSU’s campus can be found at <https://virtualtour.msu.edu/tour/campus-highlights-tour/>. If

you want your favorite Ingham County park featured (or would like to write a feature of your favorite park) contact co-chairs Chris Wickman (cwickman@nicholslaw.net) or Kristina Bilowus (bilowuskristina@law.msu.edu).

Firm Sponsorship Opportunities 2025-2026

Click here for more information

Vendor Sponsorship Opportunities 2025-2026

Click here for more information

BRIEFS Author Guidelines & Policies

IN GENERAL

Publication Schedule

Copy Deadline

BRIEFS Committee Meetings

Author and Article Pictures

Article Length and Format

- **Raising the Bar announcements:**100-200 words
- **Local legal events notices:**100-150 words
- **Columns:** 300-500 words
- **Articles:** 700-1,000 words
- Submit articles in a Word .doc/.docx

Article Ideas

Opinion Articles

Author Information

INSERT RATES

ARCHIVED ISSUES

BRIEFS Insert Contract, Rates & Policies

Community Spotlight: Ask A Lawyer Event



Names of those who appeared in the photo
Pam Amato, Michelle Lane, Takura Nyamfukudza,
Patrick Quinn, Denise LaFave Smith, Raymond
Harris

A huge thank you to **Raymond A. Harris** for coordinating such a wonderful and impactful Ask A Lawyer event at **CADL Downtown Lansing!**

This event, hosted in collaboration with the **Ingham County Bar Association** and **Legal Services of South Central Michigan**, provided free legal consultations to members of our community — helping connect people with valuable legal guidance and resources.

We're so grateful for everyone who participated and helped make this event a success, continuing to make justice accessible for all.

Here is a list of all the lawyers that volunteered their time;

Denise LaFave Smith
Pam Amato
Lauren Spencer
Logan Byrne

Stu Shafer
Alex Rusek
Josh Goodrich
Marty Neumann

Patrick Quinn
Michelle Lane
Tiffany DeBruin
Rebecca Stewart



Ask A Lawyer

Presented by the Ingham County Bar Association and Legal Services of South Central Michigan

Providing citizens of our community with access to an attorney for a free consultation* for up to a half hour on a variety of legal issues.

October 16, 2025
5 – 7 p.m.
CADL Downtown Lansing
First come, first served.
No Appointment Necessary.

*Free legal advice provided by practitioners for this event does not imply representation for your legal matter or create attorney/client privilege.

Ask A Lawyer co-chairs:
Raymond A. Harris
517-853-6900
Brandon M. H. Schumacher
517-371-8255

Capital Area District Libraries
cadl.org

CADL Downtown Lansing
401 S. Capitol Avenue
517-367-6350

ICBA Charity of the Year

A specialty donation link for your organization, so we can track donations that come directly from this partnership.

Donation Link

[CLICK HERE](#)



CAHS Website: www.cahs-lansing.org

The Heart of Animal Welfare in Lansing:

Get to Know the Capital Area Humane Society

At the Capital Area Humane Society (CAHS), we envision a community that values the human-animal bond and where all animals are healthy and safe. Since 1936, we've been a safe haven and voice for animals in need, serving the Greater Lansing area and beyond with compassion, integrity, and care.

Each year, thousands of pets and people rely on CAHS for life-changing services from adoptions and medical care to affordable spay and neuter surgeries and community education. What truly defines our organization isn't the number of animals we help, it's the stories of transformation, healing, and hope behind each one.

We're more than an animal shelter. We are where second chances begin.

A Mission of Compassion

The Capital Area Humane Society is an independent nonprofit organization that exists to protect and care for homeless, neglected, and vulnerable animals, while also supporting the people who love them. Our work centers around our mission to promote the humane treatment of companion animals through protection, placement, education, and example.

Creating Hope, Completing Families

At the heart of our mission is the effort to find loving homes for animals in need. Our shelter is open six days a

week, welcoming dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, and other small animals who are waiting for a second chance at a beautiful life. Each pet receives medical care, enrichment, and plenty of love from our volunteers and staff while they wait for their match. Our experienced adoption counselors work closely with every visitor to ensure each adoption is a thoughtful fit.



In 2024, over 3,500 animals found new homes through CAHS. Some had been surrendered by families in crisis, while others were transferred to us from overcrowded or under-resourced shelters where they faced euthanasia. Many arrived scared, injured, or overlooked, until they met the right person.

Behind every adoption is a meaningful connection. It's a child meeting their first best friend, a senior finding companionship in a quiet lap cat, and a rescued dog discovering, for the first time, what love feels like.

The Power of Prevention

While adoption is a critical part of our work, the long-term solution to pet overpopulation is prevention.

Our off-site, public Spay & Neuter Clinic provides low-cost surgeries to pet owners who may not otherwise be able to afford them. These services are not just essential to the health and behavior of individual pets, they help reduce the number of animals entering shelters, suffering on the streets, or being euthanized in overcrowded shelters.

In the past year alone, the clinic performed just under 6,000 spay and neuter surgeries. That is thousands of litters prevented. We also offer vaccines, microchips, and other vital services, helping families keep their pets safe and healthy.

Creating a More Humane Community

We believe change begins with understanding. Through school visits, summer camps, and community events, we provide humane education programs that teach children and adults about compassion, responsible pet ownership, and the importance of animal welfare.

We also offer free support to struggling pet owners, including behavior advice, food assistance, and guidance for those considering surrendering their pet to the shelter.

Volunteers Make the Difference

At the Capital Area Humane Society, volunteers are at the heart of everything we do. From walking dogs and socializing cats to helping at events and supporting adoptions, our volunteers make it possible to care for thousands of animals each year.

Whether you can give a few hours a week or help at special events, there's a role for every animal lover. When you volunteer, you're not just giving your time, you're giving pets their second chances.



Your Support Saves Lives

As an independent nonprofit, CAHS receives no government funding or support from national humane organizations. Everything we do is made possible by local individuals, businesses, and foundations who believe animals deserve safety, love, and second chances.



When you support the Capital Area Humane Society, you're not just helping one animal, you're helping us:

- Rescue and rehabilitate animals with nowhere else to go
- Provide affordable, lifesaving services to families in need
- Teach the next generation how to treat animals with kindness
- Prevent suffering before it begins

Whether you give a one-time donation, sign up to volunteer, sponsor an event, or share your voice as an advocate, you are part of something truly meaningful. You are saving lives!



Together, We Can Do More

We invite you to learn more about our work, tour our shelter, and become part of the future we're building. A future where no animal is left behind and every family has access to the care they need.

Together, we can create a community where compassion leads the way and where every animal has the chance they deserve.

To learn more about CAHS, sign up to volunteer, or to make a donation, please visit www.AdoptLansing.org.

Past Presidents of the Ingham County Bar Association

1909	Unknown	1948	Lewis J. Gregg*	1987	Webb A. Smith
1910	S.L. Kilbourne*	1949	Barnard Pierce*	1988	Peter S. Sheldon
1911	Edward Cahill*	1950	Claude J. Marshall*	1989	Elaine H. Charney
1912	Rollin H. Person*	1951	Louis Coash*	1990	Allan J. Claypool
1913	Charles F. Hammond*	1952	William H. Wise*	1991	Rose A. Houk
1914	Jason Nichols*	1953	Harold W. Glassen*	1992	Stuart J. Dunning, Jr.
1915	Unknown	1954	Richard B. Foster*	1993	Pamela J. McCabe
1916	Frank Dodge*	1955	Sam Street Hughes*	1994	Michael E. Cavanaugh
1917	Alva Cummins*	1956	Clayton F. Jennings*	1995	Nancy A. Wonch
1918	Unknown	1957	Roy T. Conley*	1996	Max R. Hoffman, Jr.
1919	Unknown	1958	Marvin J. Salmon*	1997	Beverley Nettles-Nickerson
1920	Seymour H. Person*	1959	H. Clay Campbell*	1998	Frank A. Fleischmann
1921	D.G.F. Warner*	1960	William J. Sessions*	1999	Susan L. LeDuc
1922	Charles W. Foster*	1961	Fred C. Newman*	2000	David L. Jordon
1923	Charles H. Hayden*	1962	H.H. Warner*	2001	James F. Graves
1924	Seymour H. Person*	1963	Charles R. MacLean*	2002	Lee B. Reimann
1925	Joseph E. Dunnebacke*	1964	Archie C. Fraser*	2003	Shauna L. Dunning
1926	Dean W. Kelley*	1965	Leo A. Farhat*	2004	Lawrence P. Nolan
1927	Harry A. Silsbee*	1966	Raymond R. Campbell*	2005	George Zulakis
1928	John Brooks*	1967	Allison K. Thomas*	2006	Deborah G. Adams
1929	William C. Brown*	1968	George J. Hutter*	2007	David R. Brake
1930	Edmund C. Shields*	1969	Roland R. Rhead*	2008	Richard D. Ball
1931	Eugene F. Hammond*	1970	Thomas G. Sinas*	2009	Patrick D. Hanes
1932	Spencer D. Kelly*	1971	C. Bruce Kelley*	2010	David M. Lick
1933	Walter S. Foster*	1972	John N. Seaman*	2011	Byron P. Gallagher
1934	Ernest C. Smith*	1973	Jack W. Warren*	2012	Scott L. Mandel
1935	Carl H. McLean*	1974	John L. Côté*	2013	Stacia J. Buchanan
1936	Charles Collingwood*	1975	Peter J. Treleaven*	2014	W. Josh Ard
1937	Charles E. Ecker*	1976	William L. Mackey*	2015	Liisa R. Speaker
1938	Joseph W. Planck*	1977	James A. Timmer*	2016	Jason Hanselman
1939	Leland W. Carr*	1978	James E. Burns*	2017	Mark E. Kellogg
1940	Paul G. Eger*	1979	Joseph Lavey*	2018	Jessica Fox
1941	Wilbur M. Seelye*	1980	Jack D. Born*	2019	Mary Chartier
1942	William S. Cameron*	1981	Theodore W. Swift*	2020	Charles E. Barbieri
1943	Byron L. Ballard*	1982	James Burren Brown	2021	Charles Lawler
1944	Harry Hubbard*	1983	Judson M. Werbelow*	2022	Pamela Amato
1945	Charles P. Van Note*	1984	Thomas R. Roberts*	2023	Stephen Sinas
1946	S. DeWitt Rathbunn*	1985	Jules I. Hanslovsky*	2024	Lindsay Dangl
1947	Benjamin F. Watson*	1986	David E.S. Marvin		

*Deceased

Press Release

Contact: Callie Spencer
NALA Communications Specialist
cspencer@nala.org
(918) 587-6828 ext. 501

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NALA – The Paralegal Association celebrates its 50th year!

TULSA, Okla. (August 7, 2025) – Attendees celebrated NALA's 50th anniversary at the 2025 NALA Conference & Expo in Atlantic City, New Jersey, from July 10-12, 2025. Michigan past, present, and future NALA members, from left to right:



Ida Farhat, ACP, Charter Member, East Lansing
Kelly A. LaGrave, ACP, NALA Past President, Lansing
Cheryl A. Nodarse, ACP, NALA President, Largo, Florida
(formerly of East Lansing)
Peonca Grier, CP, FRP, NALA Vice President, Orlando, Florida
(formerly of Flint)
Amber Wendel, First Time NALA Conference Attendee, Lansing
Katelynn Dye, First Time NALA Conference Attendee, Lansing

There were several other attendees from Michigan, including two first-time attendees from Suttons Bay, Vicki Parzych and Rachel Ribeiro.

NALA is proud of its Michigan members who have served NALA in their respective leadership roles. NALA President Cheryl Nodarse, ACP, has also served as Chair of the State Bar of Michigan Paralegal Section.

Kelly A. LaGrave, ACP, and Vicki Voisin, ACP, of Charlevoix (not pictured) both served as NALA Presidents. Kelly served as Past Chair of the Certifying Board and the Advanced Certified Paralegal (ACP®) Board.

Ida Farhat, ACP, is a charter member of NALA and served on the Certifying Board when NALA received its National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) accreditation for the Certified Paralegal (CP®) Exam in 2014.

Since 1975, NALA has been trusted to equip paralegals for the challenges of the future through certification, professional development, and advocacy. NALA continues to ensure that paralegals are known and valued as an integral part of the legal ecosystem.



Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Section

All section meetings will be held at Signature Solutions Group's Office (Anchor Room) at 741 N. Cedar St, Set 101-A, Lansing 48906 (south side of the building, there is a separate conference space entrance).

There will be no Meetings for the ADR Section for the months of November and December. We look forward to resuming our usual from Noon-1pm second the Thursday of each month meetings beginning on January 9, 2026.

****Please let us know if you/your organization would like to sponsor the event by providing lunch.**

January 9, 2026: Divorce Arbitration — What is it? How does it work? What are the Pros and Cons? Please RSVP, to Jenna Ribbons (Co-Chair) at either jenna@otisraylaw.com or at hello@sigolutionsgroup.com.

Criminal Defense Law Section

Employment and Labor Law Section

The Employment and Labor Law Section holds its meetings from noon to 1 p.m. each month at WMU-Cooley Law School, 300 S. Capitol Ave., Room 911, in downtown Lansing.

Section Chair is Kelly McClintock. Contact Kelly if you have ideas for topics and speakers.

Upcoming Meetings: 4th Tuesday of the month – Noon, Location: TBA

If you have questions about Section meetings, please email Kelly at mcclintock@bwlawonline.com.

Family Law Section

The Family Law Section meets on the 2nd Wednesday of the month from noon to 1 p.m. Location TBD. Lunch is provided.

Section Co-Chairs are Jessica Larson and Nicole Samuel

Upcoming Meetings:

2nd Wednesday of the month (no meetings June, July, August) at Noon, Location – Zoom

If you have suggestions for meeting topics, want to sponsor a lunch or just have general questions, please email Nicole Samuel nicole@newburglaw.com or Jessica Larson jl Larson@mclpc.com.



Probate and Trust Section

All section meetings will be held at Chalgian & Tripp Law Offices, 1019 Trowbridge Road, East Lansing, MI 48823

Section Meetings: 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. (in person with Zoom option)

- Wednesday, November 19, 2025 - Judge Amanda Pollard - Eaton County Probate Court Updates
- Wednesday, January 14, 2026 - Jenna Ribbons - Probate Mediation Trainer

- Wednesday, February 11, 2026 - Kevin Gebhard - ABC's of Medicare
- Wednesday, March 11, 2026 - Judge Shauna Dunnings and Probate Register, Ryan Buck - Ingham County Probate Court Updates

****Please let us know if you/your organization would like to sponsor the event by providing lunch**

Paralegal/Legal Assistant Section

The Paralegal/Legal Assistant Section offers free networking and educational events for legal staff in Ingham County. Meetings are held the third Wednesday of each month, virtual.

Section Co-Chairs are Megan Cochrane and Emily A. Erbisch

If you have questions or would like to learn more about the Section, contact Megan Cochrane mcochrane@fosterswift.com or Emily Erbisch emily@okeefelaw.net.

Real Estate Section

The Real Estate Section holds its meetings at noon on the fourth Thursday of each month. Location TBD.
Section Co-Chairs are Bill Tomblin, Ellen E. Ward, and Mitchell Zolton.

Upcoming Meetings: 4th Friday of the month unless specified otherwise via Listserv (No meetings June, July, August, and December) — Noon

Location: TBA

Lunch is served at meetings. Upcoming speakers and topics will be announced. Member input is always appreciated.

If you plan to attend a meeting, please RSVP to Bill Tomblin at Wdtomblaw@aol.com.

SINCE  1951

SINAS DRAMIS

PERSONAL INJURY LAW

Michigan's Advocates for the Injured



“

My family and I were glad we chose the team at Sinas Dramis to help us navigate the process and legal options after sustaining a personal injury. [They] were caring and compassionate advocates to have by our side throughout this challenging time in our lives. I would highly recommend this firm if you are looking for a personal injury lawyer that is trustworthy, caring, and hard-working.

~ Past Client

”

**LANSING'S LEADER IN
PERSONAL INJURY LAW**



SinasDramis.com | 866.758.0031

Referral Fees Honored
Subject to ethical rules

Thanks for reading

BRIEFS



Feedback? briefs@inghambar.org

Next issue:
Public Defenders Office/Veterans



[@inghambar](https://www.instagram.com/inghambar)



[@inghamcountybarassociation](https://www.facebook.com/inghamcountybarassociation)



[@ICBALawyers](https://twitter.com/ICBALawyers)



[linkedin.com/company/ingham-county-bar-association](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ingham-county-bar-association)