

WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN



April 21, 2015

VIA FACSIMILE
517.335.6863

Governor Rick Snyder
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, Michigan 48909

RE: Diversity in the Michigan Judiciary

Dear Governor Snyder:

The Women Lawyers Association of Michigan strongly encourages you to consider qualified women lawyers for existing judicial positions in order to promote diversity in the Michigan judiciary. Since 1992, women's representation in law school classes has approached 50%. Despite record numbers of judicial nominees and confirmations, the percentage of female judges is far lower.

Pursuant to information obtained from Michigan Courts, only 18% of Michigan's former judges were women.¹ The composition of Michigan's existing judiciary represents greater diversity, but only 1/3rd of Michigan's current judiciary is female.² Simply stated, further progress is still needed.

According to data, of the 49 appointments you have made as the Governor of Michigan, 15 appointments have been women (30.6%).³ Your female appointees to courts across the State of Michigan break down as follows:

- Michigan Supreme Court (0%);
- Court of Appeals (0%);
- Circuit Courts (40%); and
- District Courts (26%).⁴

It is our understanding that you are presently interviewing for an open judicial position in the 17th Circuit Court (Kent County). The Honorable Kathleen A. Feeney is the only woman placed on the bench of the 17th Circuit Court in the past fifteen years. We would like to bring to your attention that there is an opportunity to create a more diverse bench in Kent County.

The Women Lawyers Association of Michigan believes that a diverse Michigan judiciary will better represent the interest of a diverse community. A more diverse judiciary can bring different perspectives to bear on the development of the law and to the concept of justice itself. A more diverse judiciary would not undermine the quality of our judges; it would increase public trust and confidence in the judiciary.

Thank you for considering our comments and request.

Sincerely,



Michele A. Rivas
President, Women Lawyers Association of Michigan

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¹ Michigan Courts, One Court of Justice available at <http://courts.mi.gov/courts/coa/judges/pages/past.aspx> (last visited April 21, 2015).

² Michigan Courts, One Court of Justice available at <http://courts.mi.gov/courts/coa/judges/pages/current.aspx> (last visited April 21, 2015).

³ Ballotopedia, data provided and updated automatically with new appointments available at http://ballotopedia.org/Judges_appointed_by_Rick_Snyder (last visited April 21, 2015).

⁴ *Id.*