

MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



Office of Public Information

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MARILYN KELLY IS NEW CHIEF JUSTICE OF MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT; FIFTH WOMAN TO SERVE AS HEAD OF HIGH COURT

LANSING, MI, January 8, 2009 – Marilyn Kelly is the new Chief Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court, the Court announced today. She is the fifth woman, since the Court was first established in 1805, to serve as the Court’s leader.

Every two years, the seven Justices elect one of their colleagues to serve as Chief Justice for a term of two years. According to the Court’s custom, a Chief Justice generally serves no more than two consecutive two-year terms.

The vote to elect Kelly took place earlier today, at the Court’s first public administrative conference. The seven Justices voted 4-3 to elect Kelly, with Justices Maura D. Corrigan, Robert P. Young, Jr., and Stephen J. Markman dissenting.

Kelly said she welcomes the opportunity to serve as Chief Justice. “I view this as an honor and a great responsibility,” she said. “I will be working every day to deserve the title of Chief Justice – with my fellow Justices, with the Michigan judicial branch, and with the people of Michigan.”

The Chief Justice’s position, Kelly added, has become more challenging in recent years. “From federal audits of state foster care programs to legal representation for the indigent to continuing budget cuts, the Supreme Court has more issues than ever before in its history,” she said. “Following in the best traditions of the Chief Justices who preceded me, I will seek solutions with the help of my colleagues, the legislature, and the executive branch.”

Raised in Detroit, Kelly earned her undergraduate degree from Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti. After a year’s graduate study at La Sorbonne, University of Paris, France, she received her master’s degree from Middlebury College in Vermont. She taught French language and literature in the Grosse Pointe Public Schools, at Albion College and Eastern Michigan University before attending law school at Wayne State University, where she graduated with honors. She practiced law for 17 years in Michigan courts until her 1988 election to the Michigan Court of Appeals; she was re-elected to the Court of Appeals in 1994.

Kelly was elected to the Michigan Supreme Court for an eight-year term in 1996, and re-elected in 2004.

Kelly’s professional and civic activities include serving as a member of the Michigan

State Board of Education, to which she was elected in 1964 and again in 1968; her 12 years of service on the board included two as the board's president. Active in national, state, and local bar organizations, Kelly is a Fellow of the Michigan State Bar Foundation, which provides grants for civil legal aid to the poor and to improve the administration of justice in Michigan. A past president of the Women's Bar Association and the Women Lawyers' Association of Michigan, she also served as a member of the State Bar of Michigan's Representative Assembly. She co-chaired the State Bar of Michigan's Open Justice Commission and is a past president and board member of the National Consortium for Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts. Kelly is editor of the 6th Edition of Michigan Family Law, published by the Institute for Continuing Legal Education.

Her community activities include serving as a board member of Channel 56-Public Television in Detroit and of the Women's Survival Center in Pontiac, and as vice president of the board of the Detroit Institute of Technology. She has also served on the development committee for St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Pontiac and on advisory committees of the Detroit Public Schools, Wayne County Community College and Oakland County Community College.

Kelly holds honorary doctor of law degrees from Eastern Michigan University and Michigan State University College of Law. Her awards include the Michigan Education Association's Distinguished Service Award, the Eleanor Roosevelt Humanities Award from the State of Israel Bonds Attorney Division, and the State Bar of Michigan's Michael Franck Award for outstanding contributions to the legal profession. In 2005, she was honored by Wayne State University as one of the university's outstanding alumni.

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