

Judge Alexander Believes Judicial Camaraderie Creates Foundation for Success in Michigan's Business Courts

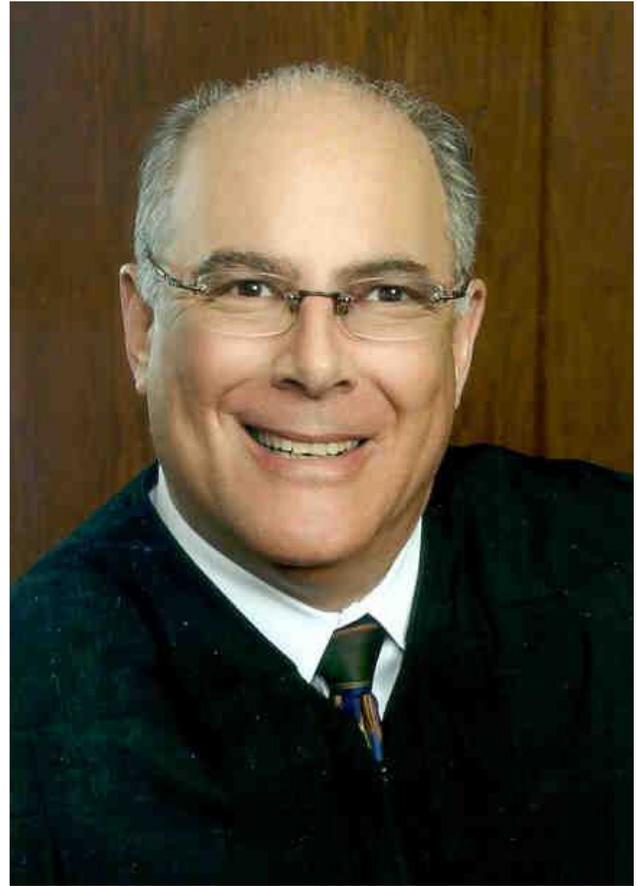
Patience and a love of the law are two qualities Judge James Alexander, of the 6th Circuit Court in Oakland County, thinks are necessary for all judges to possess.

"People are coming at you fast and furiously and you need to be able to step back, relax, listen patiently, and make a decision," Judge Alexander said.

Before Judge Alexander was a judge, he was working at a private practice as a corporate planning and litigation lawyer. Later on, he joined former Governor John Engler's staff, and was later appointed by Gov. Engler to the Oakland County Circuit Court in 2001.

The Oakland County Business Court began in June 2013, after Governor Snyder signed legislation mandating that all circuit courts with at least three judges maintain a business court docket. Judge Alexander is one of two judges assigned to the Oakland County Business Court.

Judge Alexander explained, "Having a specialized court with a group of judges who have developed consistency and expertise makes it more desirable for businesses to come to Michigan because they know what they are going to get if



Judge James Alexander

they end up in a dispute."

The Oakland County Business Court had 960 business cases filed last year.

"The cases that we get can range from a very simple collection matter over \$25,000 to major shareholder derivatives actions that may have 30 or 40 different parties involved with lawyers from all over the county," he explained. "We really handle all kinds of business related issues."



In addition to working with diverse cases, the Oakland County Business Court utilizes multiple tactics to improve efficiency. A few tactics implemented include employing advisory committees and case management conferences.

Judge Alexander explained, "One of the things we have gotten to understand through this docket is that a lot of businesses we see are going to have ongoing relationships. They might have run into a little hiccup with that relationship, and it is important to resolve it quickly and without too much adversarial nature, so they can get back to business."

"The business judges around the state are always talking to each other. We are sharing ideas, we are sharing experiences, and we're not afraid to call each other and say 'Hey, I'm dealing with this issue. Have you had it and can you help me?'"

Judge Alexander attributes the success of business courts across the state of Michigan to the camaraderie shared amongst the other 21 business court judges and the transparency they share.

"The business judges around the state meet a few times a year, and we are always talking to each other," Judge Alexander explained. "We are sharing ideas, we are sharing experiences, we're not afraid to call each other and say 'Hey, I'm dealing

with this issue. Have you had it and can you help me?' The other thing is all of our decisions are published on the Supreme Court website so lawyers can know what to expect if they have an issue and we can go and see what our colleagues have done if we have an issue."

Looking at the future, Judge Alexander said that business courts in Michigan still have a long way to go, but have a solid foundation.

"It is important to understand business courts are still in their infancy," Judge Alexander said. "Michigan became a State in 1837 and business courts became a thing three years ago. We are still learning to walk, but I think we have done a really good job at this point."

In the future, Judge Alexander has plans for the business court to look at new issues, such as electronic discovery.

"It is an ongoing process," Judge Alexander said, "but it is a lot of fun being on the ground floor, and I look forward to the things we are going to accomplish down the road." ✎