

SEMINAR SPEAKERS

HONORABLE FREDDIE G. BURTON, JR.
*Chief Judge,
Wayne County Probate Court*

HONORABLE DAVID BRAXTON
*Chief Judge Pro Tempore
Wayne County Probate Court*

HONORABLE JUDY A. HARTSFIELD
Wayne County Probate Court

HONORABLE TERRANCE A. KEITH
Wayne County Probate Court

HONORABLE LAWRENCE J. PAOLUCCI
Wayne County Probate Court

HONORABLE MICHAEL J. MCCLORY
Wayne County Probate Court

APRIL MAYCOCK
*Probate Register
Wayne County Probate Court*

JENNIFER PARMALEE, ESQ.
*Chief Deputy Probate Register
Wayne County Probate Court*

KEVIN SANKER, ESQ.
*Court Attorney
Wayne County Probate Court*

SORJOURNER JONES, MPA
*BHU Liaison Manager
Wayne County Probate Court*

NATHAN R. PIWOWARSKI, ESQ.
*McCurdy Wotila & Porteous PC
Cadillac, MI*

TERI A. JORDAN, ESQ.
*Law Offices of Teri A. Jordan
Detroit, MI*

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*Law Offices of Roman J. Ficaj, PLLC
Livonia, MI*

HONORABLE FREDDIE G. BURTON, JR.

*Chief Judge
Wayne County Probate Court*

A member of the Wayne County Probate Court since 1987, Hon. Freddie G. Burton, Jr. served as Chief Judge from 1990 through the end of 1997. He was also Presiding Judge of the Family Division, Juvenile Section, Wayne County Circuit Court from 1997-1998 and on the Circuit Court's Executive Committee from 1998-1999. From January 1, 2011 through August 3, 2015, Judge Burton served as Chief Judge Pro Tempore of the Court. He was appointed Chief Judge on August 4, 2015.

Before assuming his position on the probate court bench, Judge Burton formerly served as a Wayne County Commissioner, a Public Administrator (Wayne County), and was also engaged in private practice. Judge Burton currently serves on the Wayne County Election Commission as Chairman, Luella Hannan Memorial Foundation Board of Trustees and the Flinn Foundation Board of Trustees. Among his many professional affiliations are the Commission on National Probate Court Standards, the Michigan Probate Judges Association (past President), the State Judicial Council of Michigan, the Association of Black Judges of Michigan, the National College of Probate Judges, the Wolverine Bar Association, and the National Bar Association. Judge Burton has also served in numerous other organizations, including St. John Hospital and Medical Center Board of Trustees (past Chairman), the Plymouth Educational Foundation (past President), Orchards Children's Services Board of Directors, Wayne State University Alumni Association (past President), Youth Connection (former Chairman), and Youthville Detroit (Chair-Emeritus). He has given numerous presentations on probate law for the Institute of Continuing Legal Education (ICLE).

Judge Burton is also a senior status member of the bar in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and a graduate of Michigan State University and Wayne State University Law School.

HONORABLE JUDY A. HARTSFIELD

*Judge,
Wayne County Probate Court*

A graduate of the University of San Diego Law School and recipient of a B.A. from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Judge Hartsfield is also a member of the California Bar. Judge Hartsfield has been a Probate Judge since 2004. She has served in all divisions of the court. Before being appointed to the Probate bench, Judge Hartsfield was the Bureau Chief of the Child and Family Services Bureau in the state Department of Attorney General and was responsible for overseeing four divisions in Detroit and Lansing.

HONORABLE TERRANCE A. KEITH

*Judge,
Wayne County Probate Court*

Judge Terrance A. Keith has been a member of the Wayne County Probate Court since 2010.

Prior to his appointment, Judge Keith was the principal tax attorney in the Wayne County Office of Corporation Counsel representing the Office of the Wayne County Treasurer. As principal attorney, he created a public

service campaign educating the public on the consequences of the non-payment of delinquent taxes. Within the first two months, tax delinquencies and forfeitures were reduced 60 percent. As a result of his efforts, Judge Keith was appointed Wayne County Chief Deputy Treasurer, responsible for all operations, restructuring and recreating the public image of the Office of the Wayne County Treasurer.

As Chief Deputy Treasurer, Judge Keith created: the Community Outreach and Taxpayer Assistance Departments to help taxpayers remain in their homes; partnerships with community groups, churches and non-profit organizations, including the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization; two “Tax-A-Thons” on WXYZ-TV Channel 7 and the first program donating foreclosed property to community groups for urban farming. As a direct result of these programs, thousands of occupied properties were saved from public auction. The outreach programs remain the cornerstone of the Wayne County Treasurers’ community outreach.

Judge Keith is a former member of the State Bar of Michigan Representative Assembly, the Michigan State Bar Board of Commissioners, and the Michigan State Bar Attorney Discipline Hearing Panel. He is a member of numerous bar associations and the recipient of numerous awards for his contributions to the legal profession. Judge Keith is recognized as the “Founding Father” of the D. Augustus Straker Bar Association and the Detroit Mercy Law Association of Black Law Alumni.

Judge Keith is a graduate of the University of Michigan and Detroit Mercy Law. He is former law clerk of United States Bankruptcy Judge Ray Reynolds Graves.

HONORABLE LAWRENCE J. PAOLUCCI

*Judge,
Wayne County Probate Court*

Lawrence J. Paolucci was appointed by Governor Rick Snyder to the Wayne County Probate Court on October 22, 2015. Prior to this appointment to the bench, he served as the Court Attorney for the Wayne County Probate Court for eleven (11) years. Mr. Paolucci graduated from Kenyon College (OH) with a BA in Political Science in 1988 and from the Detroit College of Law (MSU College of Law) in 1992. While in law school, he served as the judicial law clerk to the late Hon. Raymond R. Cashen of the Macomb County Circuit Court, as well as, the Hon. James J. Rashid, of the Wayne County Circuit Court. Following law school, he was an associate attorney with the law firm of Bellanca, Beattie & DeLisle, P.C. in Detroit/Harper Woods, Michigan, for over ten (10) years concentrating much of his practice in probate areas such as guardianships, conservatorships, trusts, and decedent estates, including work with the Consul of Italy’s office in Detroit. He joined the Wayne County Probate Court in February 2004. Lawrence is presently a member of the Wayne County Probate Bar Association and is the past President of the Catholic Lawyer Society of Detroit.

HON. MICHAEL J. MCCLORY, ESQ.

*Judge,
Wayne County Probate Court, assigned to Third Circuit Court, Family Division, Juvenile Section*

Hon. Michael J. McClory was appointed a Wayne County Probate Court Judge on November 1, 2022. He was elected to a six-year term effective January 1, 2023. Judge McClory is assigned to the Juvenile Section of the Family Division of the Wayne County Circuit Court, where he hears abuse/neglect, delinquency, and adoption proceedings. He oversees Juvenile Mental Health Court.

Prior to becoming a Judge, Michael McClory served as the Chief Deputy Probate Register for the Wayne County Probate Court. A graduate of Wayne State University Law School, his professional career has been in the areas of estate planning, administration, and probate. Judge McClory is a past Chairperson of the Probate and Estate Planning Section of the State Bar of Michigan. He is a former member of the State Bar of Michigan's Representative Assembly. Judge McClory previously served on the Michigan Supreme Court's Estates and Trusts, Guardianship and Conservatorship, and Mental Health Forms Committees. He is an adjunct professor at the Thomas M. Cooley Law School. Judge McClory is a recipient of the Michael W. Irish Award, presented by the Probate and Estate Planning Section, for outstanding contributions to the estate planning profession.

Judge McClory is a frequent lecturer on probate practice and procedure for the Institute of Continuing Legal Education (ICLE) (most recently at the Fundamentals of Estate Administration seminar in June 2022), the Michigan Probate and Juvenile Registers Association, the Michigan Judicial Institute, and numerous other groups. His articles on probate law have been published in the Michigan Probate and Estate Planning Journal: "MCR 5.101 and the Limits of Probate Court Jurisdiction"; "Joint Financial Accounts: Legal Analysis and Litigation Tips"; and "EPIC's Antilapse Provisions: An Analysis". Judge McClory has authored a chapter on challenges to joint financial assets which is part of Michigan Probate Litigation: A Guide to Contested Matters, published by ICLE. He also has written chapters on the duties and liabilities of guardians for adults and minors which is part of ICLE's Michigan Guardianship and Conservatorship Handbook and provides editorial assistance for ICLE's Michigan Probate Benchbook.

SORJOURNER JONES, MPA

*BHU Liaison Manager
Wayne County Probate Court*

Sojourner Jones has been working in the field of mental health for over 30 years. Affectionately known as the "Fixer". Majority of her tenure has been serving those persons who have been clinically diagnosed as mentally ill; many who have history with substance abuse and/or interaction with the criminal justice system. She has worked for the U.S. Attorney of the Eastern District of Michigan and Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network. In addition, with the Detroit Police Department, Michigan Department of Corrections- as the first African American contractor to develop and coordinate all after care plans for returning citizens in Wayne County who received mental health services while incarcerated. October 2024, Sojourner was appointed as the BHU Liaison Manager at WPCP. Her role is to serve as a conduit between the courts, hospitals and outpatient mental health treatment providers ensuring compliance of civil commitment procedures and orders (formerly Kevin's Law). Her department also process guardianship cases for those who are Developmentally Disabled. She is known in other avenues to engage the most complex/difficult consumers with treatment/medication adherence and /or to reengage them with community mental health services. Continuously working to resolve structural issues, communication glitches, and consistent patterns between law enforcement, courts, and community mental health treatment providers. Sojourner educates law enforcement and the courts regarding inpatient and other level of cares that may include hospitalization for those persons who meet the Mental Health Code criteria. Due to her history, she is tasked to train first responders on de-escalation techniques for engaging those persons who may be experiencing a mental illness, trauma informed care and suicide prevention. She has served on several panels, numerous committees, and task forces with Wayne State University's School of Social Work to develop crisis intervention strategies, warning signs for suicide prevention, law enforcement engagement with persons who may be experiences a mental health crisis, and jail diversion strategies. She has also served as a peer reviewer for federal grants administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Most recent notable recognition came in 2023 as she was named "Crain's Notable Leaders in Behavioral Health". She is a college graduate from Central Michigan University (MPA) and Michigan State

University (BS). She is a Licensed Social Worker in the State of Michigan. She is the mother of two children. She is an avid golfer, loves to sing, the voice of a “Stellar Award” winner (3x) internet Gospel Radio station, traveling, and indulging in retail therapy. She is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated ®, a Lifelong Member of the NAACP, and The Historic Little Rock Baptist Church. More importantly.... she cares and is not afraid to do the work that’s needed!

NATHAN R. PIWOWARSKI, ESQ.

McCurdy Wotila & Porteous PC
Cadillac, MI

Nathan R. Piwowarski has been practicing law since 2007 (B.A., Albion College, J.D. Michigan State University College of Law), following a short stint as a legislative aide in the Michigan Senate. He has been a shareholder of his firm since 2009.

Mr. Piwowarski has extensive estate planning, estate administration, and elder law practice. He has significant experience regarding contested estates (including will contests, trust contests, and breach of fiduciary duty claims), contested guardianships and conservatorships, special needs planning, and elder law. Nathan contributes to his firm’s litigation practice and has written briefs submitted to the Michigan Court of Appeals and Michigan Supreme Court. Nathan regularly serves as a personal representative and trustee (including as County Public Administrator). He is a Special Assistant Attorney General for Medicaid Estate Recovery matters, and previously served as a SAAG for the DHHS in probate proceedings initiated by Adult Protective Services.

Mr. Piwowarski regularly presents for Michigan’s Institute of Continuing Legal Education. He authored the chapter, “Contesting Wills, Trusts, and other Governing Instruments,” in ICLE’s treatise, *Michigan Probate Litigation* and the chapter concerning joint trusts in the forthcoming revised edition of ICLE’s *Drafting the Michigan Trust*. He has also presented to various organizations, including the Michigan Bankers Association, the Midwest Conference of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel, SBM’s Elder and Disability Rights Section, and various Michigan banks and trust companies.

Mr. Piwowarski is the chair-elect of the Michigan Bar’s Probate and Estate Planning Section. He has previously served as the Chairperson of the Legislation Development and Drafting Committee. Nathan and the committee contributed to the proposals that became Public Act 143 of 2018 (exempt property allowance remedial legislation), Public Acts 491 and 492 of 2018 (certificate of trust modernization), as well as proposals concerning remote witnessing and notarization and caregiver agreements. Nathan has been a member of the Elder Abuse Task Force. He has served as an expert witness concerning sound information-gathering, appropriate drafting practices, and trust interpretation.

In recognition of his contributions in continuing legal education and improvement of Michigan’s probate laws, Nathan has been accepted as a Super Lawyer and a fellow in the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel.

Mr. Piwowarski has served as President of the Cadillac Area Community Foundation and as a trustee of Munson Cadillac Hospital. He is married to Dr. Jennifer Piwowarski, and the father of two upper-elementary-age children.
