

## Judicial Conference Annual Report 2004-2005

All judges of Michigan courts of record who are active members of the State Bar of Michigan are automatically members of the Judicial Conference. Conference bylaws provide for a 27 member Executive Committee composed of nine members each from the Michigan District Judges Association, Michigan Probate Judges Association and Michigan Judges Association. This year, in an effort to ensure fuller consideration of judiciary concerns, the Presidents of the Association of Black Judges of Michigan and Michigan Indian Judicial Association were invited to participate on the Executive Committee as nonvoting liaisons.

The Executive Committee meets 5 to 6 times a year for the purpose of addressing efforts to improve efficient administration of justice and to further relationship between Bench and Bar. The Executive Committee continues to provide a forum for judges of different benches to discuss common issues and build consensus on court rule and legislative matters impacting citizen access to the legal system and court operations. Executive Committee meeting agendas regularly include exchange of communication with representatives from the State Bar Board of Commissioners, State Bar Legal Counsel and State Court Administrator's office. The Executive Committee was also represented at quarterly meetings with the Chief Justice along with leadership from MDJA, MPJA and MJA.

Access to justice was identified as a critical issue for Judicial Conference this year. The Executive Committee committed to formal support for the State Bar's Access to Justice Campaign by developing a strategy to increase judicial contributions. The Committee worked with the ATJ staff to establish a system for reporting judicial contributions by association. An annual Judicial Conference award has been initiated to recognize the judicial association with the highest per cent of member participation in the Access to Justice Campaign. The award will be inaugurated at the 2005 State Bar Annual Meeting.

Judicial Conference Executive Committee is also engaged in exploring improved communication among members through better use of available information technology. Current options under consideration include distribution of Committee agendas and minutes to all Conference members through an email distribution list and creation of a judicial list serve.

In addition to reviewing court rule and legislative referrals from the Bar, the Executive Committee also undertook a process of establishing priorities to ensure continued focus on matters of importance to Conference members. The Executive Committee set the following priorities for Judicial Conference:

- Increase judicial participation in the Access to Justice Campaign
- Ensure health care coverage for all judges
- Improve court and judicial security
- Raise judicial consciousness of alternative dispute resolution options

- Encourage implementing legislation for the State Officers Compensation Commission
- Review Judicial Conference Bylaws

Judicial Conference looks forward to continued cooperation between Bench and Bar and renewed effort to achieve successful resolution of Conference priorities.