

Welcome, Judge Bowman

by *Kevin M. Oeffner*
Circuit Court Administrator

On January 16 the Circuit Court learned that its newest judge had been appointed by the governor. The Honorable Leo Bowman was selected to fill the vacant judgeship created by the retirement of Judge Deborah Tyner. Judge Bowman officially began his service as a circuit judge on February 5.

Judge Bowman is no newcomer to the judiciary. At the time of his appointment to Circuit Court, Judge Bowman was serving as Chief Judge of the 50th District Court, a position he held for eight of his 18 years on that bench. During his tenure in district court, Judge Bowman served as a visiting judge in Oakland County, assigned to the Drug Court where he presided over many trials.

Judge Bowman is likewise no stranger to Oakland County. He is a native of Pontiac, having been born, raised and educated here. He is a graduate of Pontiac Central High School and Oakland University. Judge Bowman ventured south – to the University of Detroit Law School, where he earned his Juris Doctorate in 1981 – but returned to Oakland County to begin his legal career.

His career began as a deputy city attorney for the City of Pontiac. He served in that capacity for a few years until appointed as the first legislative auditor for the City of Pontiac and legal advisor to the City Council in 1984. Judge Bowman held those posts until an opportunity arose that he could not ignore.

A vacancy occurred on the 50th District Court bench in 1988. Judge Robert Cunningham resigned, creating an open seat on the bench. With strong ties to the community and city government, and a strong passion for service, Judge Bowman decided to run for the vacant seat. His efforts proved fruitful and in November 1988, the residents of the City of Pontiac elected Judge Bowman as district court judge. He took office on January 1, 1989. Judge Bowman has since been re-elected three times, most recently in November 2006. He was just 16 days into his fourth term when the governor called and sprang the news that he had been appointed to the Circuit Court.

Judge Bowman's commitment to the legal profession is demonstrated not only by his longstanding service as a jurist, but also in his many contributions to advance the administration of justice and respect for the law. Here are but a few examples: he was elected to the OCBA board of directors; he served as chairman of the OCBA Diversity Committee; he was a longtime member of the Oakland County Inns of Court; and he has lectured on behalf of the Institute for Continuing Legal Education, the Michigan Judicial Institute and the American Judges Association.

Judge Bowman was elected president of the Michigan District Judges Association in 2001. He has served as a member of the National Bar Association Judicial Council, the State Bar Representative Assembly, the American Judges

Association board of directors, the Michigan Association of Drug Court Professionals, and the American Judges Association's Domestic Violence and Problem-Solving Courts committees.

One of Judge Bowman's strongest passions is to advance the health, education and welfare of young people across Oakland County and to affect their behavior for good. He routinely travels to area schools and instructs students in career development and planning, opportunities in the legal field, reading fundamentals, the importance and relevance of the United States Constitution, crime prevention, and a host of other important topics. The awards and recognitions he has received for his service in the advancement of education, although not sought, are evidence of the respect he has earned by community and academic leaders throughout Oakland County.

Judge Bowman is married to Clara, a union that is in its 33rd year. They have three sons, who are quite successful in their own rights. Leo Jr. is a graduate of Michigan State University in finance and communications. David is a Florida State University graduate who majored in international affairs and public policy. Kendal is currently enrolled at the University of Michigan and is pursuing an architectural degree.

Judge Bowman has been assigned to the Family Division of Circuit Court, taking over the family docket formerly assigned to Judge Daniel Patrick O'Brien. Judge Bowman is located in chambers/courtroom 4C. Judge Daniel O'Brien has been assigned to the civil/criminal docket formerly held by Judge Tyner, and he continues to preside in chambers/courtroom 2F. Judge Colleen O'Brien has moved to chambers/courtroom 2A. Please make a note of these docket and courtroom reassignments.

It is a pleasure to welcome Judge Bowman to the Circuit bench. Several of his colleagues noted, "His demeanor, fairness, and deliberate manner will be a great asset to the court." In referencing Judge Bowman's appointment, Chief Judge Wendy Potts said, "His breadth of experience in the Pontiac District Court will serve him well here in Circuit Court. We are confident that he will be a great addition to our bench and will serve the citizens of Oakland County with distinction."

With that, we say, "Welcome, Judge Bowman."
Until next time...

