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**House Passes Tougher Penalties for Criminal Contempt
Following Testimony of Oakland Circuit Judge Michael Warren**

Oakland County, MI (December 1, 2006) – A bill that seeks to increase sanctions for criminal contempt has taken a step closer to becoming law. On Wednesday, November 29, Oakland County Circuit Judge Michael Warren testified before the State House Judiciary Committee on House Bill 6271 that would increase sanctions for criminal contempt of blatant perjury and disobedience of court orders. By the following afternoon, H.B. 6271 had passed the full house. The Senate is expected to take up the bill next week.

Sponsored by State Representative David Law, this legislation will update the fine from \$250, which was the original fine enacted in 1846, to \$7,500; triple the jail sentence from 30 days to 93 days; and make it clear, because the law was unclear, that it can be a probation offense if found guilty of this criminal sanction of contempt of court.

“Strengthening the penalties will improve the administration of justice,” says Warren. “If litigants understand that they can blatantly lie under oath (even when extrinsic evidence clearly proves the falsity of the statements) and violate court orders without consequence, we only degrade the rule of law and encourage more serious criminal behavior.”

Warren noted at the hearing why these reforms are necessary. First, the sanctions are seriously outdated. The \$250 fine has existed since the time when the State of Michigan first became a state. In today’s money, \$250 would equal approximately \$6,000. The increase is simply keeping up with inflation. Then, strengthening the penalties by heightening the seriousness of contempt will improve the administration of justice. And finally, by making it a more serious offense, individuals will be deterred from committing perjury and further wrong-doing.

Warren has expert knowledge in matters of criminal contempt. He has written a practice guide for lawyers entitled “Contempt of Court (How to Kit)” with the Institute of Continuing Legal Education, as well as a number of guest commentaries regarding the law, education, and civics in *The Detroit News*, *The Detroit Free Press*, *The Oakland Press*, and other newspapers.

As he further notes: “If truth does not matter in our courts of law, how can it matter elsewhere? If we will not enforce the law in our own courts, how can we expect that it will be adhered to outside of them? In the end, the courts must stand against contempt of court or stand for nothing at all.”

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An electronic photograph of Judge Warren is available. For a copy, please contact Marcia Travis at travism@oakgov.com