

# MICHIGAN LAWYERS WEEKLY

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## LEADERS in the LAW 2016

### Douglas L. Toering

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Toering litigates commercial and insurance matters. He undertook a multiyear mission to push for the formation of business courts. He chairs the State Bar's Business Law Section and leads its Business Courts and Commercial Litigation committees. Toering also helped draft the amicus brief for *Madugula v. Taub*, addressing shareholder oppression cases. Toering has been a volunteer director of the Christian Legal Aid of Southeast Michigan since 2002.

#### What does practicing law mean to you personally and professionally?

Our legal system rests on the legal principles we hold most dear: Freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, equal justice under law, right to a jury trial, separation of powers, due process, equal protection, the Constitution, independent judiciary, rule of law, innocent until proven guilty, right to counsel, attorney-client privilege. Who guards these precious rights? Lawyers. Without us, the American experiment would fail, and our legacy of freedom would be in jeopardy. Let us, as lawyers, be faithful to defend these rights for our clients, our families, and our country.

#### Where did you grow up? Please provide one memorable anecdote about your childhood.

I grew up in Holland and Jenison, Michigan. One memorable experience was repeatedly stalling the family's 1971 station wagon as I was learning to drive a three-speed manual transmission (a "three-on-the-tree" as it was called.) It brings a smile to my face now, but it didn't then.

#### What was your first job? What did you learn from the experience?

In high school, I worked part time one summer pulling weeds on a flower farm. As I look back on it, that job gave



me an appreciation for how hard farmers work. When I buy groceries or eat vegetables, I now realize that others worked very hard so I can feed myself and my family.

#### What do you consider your biggest professional accomplishment and why?

I have been privileged to have assisted in implementing the business courts in Michigan. Many others were involved — too many to name here. The business courts have fulfilled the statutory mandates of resolving business cases efficiently and enhancing the accuracy and predictability of decisions in business and commercial cases. Two of the main reasons for this success are early and frequent judicial involvement and early ADR. This, along with other evidence-based practices, may prove to be a model for other trial courts in Michigan and elsewhere.

#### Describe the biggest challenge you've had to face in your legal career.

Opening my own practice and then building my clientele.

Developing a practice from the ground up is difficult, but satisfying.

#### If you could not be a lawyer, what occupation would you choose? Why?

I would probably teach law, with particular emphasis on helping law students become ready for the practice of law and ready for life.

#### What is the best advice you've ever received that you've actually used?

"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." This is an old proverb that has served me well.

#### Everyone has a "guilty pleasure." What is yours?

Doughnuts and pastries.

#### How would you describe yourself in one word?

Dedicated.