



James H. Fisher

Of Counsel | GRAND RAPIDS

Email: JFisher@dickinson-wright.com Phone: 616-336-1051 Fax: 844-670-6009

James (Jim) Fisher brings several decades of experience as a successful litigator and distinguished jurist to his active ADR practice. Trained as both a Civil and Domestic mediator, he provides skilled mediation and arbitration services to attorneys and their clients in all types of cases.

Jim's undergraduate engineering training and experience in banking, investments and finance have enabled him to help resolve many complex cases involving business valuations. He has also served as an expert witness in cases involving analysis of business valuations and attorney fee issues.

Jim began his career as an assistant prosecutor, and in this capacity he tried numerous felony jury cases. He was appointed as the Barry County Prosecuting Attorney at the age of 28, and followed that part of his career with 15 years in private practice, during which time he handled virtually every type of case in all state courts, at all levels. He represented individuals and small businesses, as well as several municipal clients, and served as City Attorney for Hastings and Village Attorney for Middleville.

He became the 5th Circuit Court Judge in 1995, and enjoyed a distinguished career as Chief Judge of his local court, which was widely recognized as one of the most innovative and well managed trial courts in the state of Michigan. His court was among six unified court demonstration courts designated by the Michigan Supreme Court in 1996, and he was one of the first judges in the state of Michigan selected as Chief Judge all courts in his county. Recognized by the Michigan Supreme Court for management excellence in 2000, his court was also featured as a paradigm of the future in the 2011 Judicial Crossroads Report of the State Bar of Michigan.

Since leaving the bench in 2011, Jim has built a successful mediation and arbitration practice, and he remains active in public service as a member of the Michigan Indigent Defense Commission, having previously served as Chair.

Prominent Assignments

Jim's current practice is primarily mediation and arbitration. His mediations involve Divorce; Personal Injury; Medical and Legal malpractice; and Real Estate, Construction, Contract and Estate disputes. He has also arbitrated commercial claims and divorce cases. These assignments are primarily private and confidential,

WWW.DICKINSON-WRIGHT.COM

but many have involved claims of 10 – 50 million dollars, and Jim has extensive experience in the analysis and evaluation of valuations of closely held businesses. He also serves on the Trust and Investment Committees as a Director of Hastings City Bank, so he has extensive experience in those areas, as well.

Jim was appointed as Chair of the Michigan Indigent Defense Commission by Governor Snyder in 2014, and before that he chaired the Governor's Indigent Defense Advisory Commission. He has developed extensive experience in the area of attorney compensation, and he has served as an expert witness in disputes involving attorney fees. As a judge, he ruled on issues of attorney fees on countless occasions.

As a Circuit Judge for 16 years, Jim presided over a wide range of cases, involving all manner of disputes. One of his more prominent cases was Insurance Institute of Michigan, et al v Commissioner of the Office of Financial and Insurance Services, a dispute involving several hundred million dollars and insurance underwriting affecting all casualty insurance rates in Michigan. Jim's opinion was eventually adopted by the Michigan Supreme Court in a landmark decision regarding insurance underwriting. Another prominent case of Jim's was Reynolds v Bureau of State Lottery. Jim's opinion in that case had the effect of outlawing political bingo, a decision which was affirmed by the Court of Appeals.

In his judicial career Jim presided over more than 20,000 cases and innumerable trials. He developed a reputation for rendering thoughtful decisions without delay. Jim was also a visionary in the area of court reform as Chief Judge of the Barry County Trial Court, and he was recognized as a leader in court management. Following his retirement from the bench, he served for two years as a consultant to the Michigan Supreme Court, a project funded by a grant from the State Justice Institute which Jim wrote and implemented. Through this project, many local courts across the state developed strategic plans to improve their services.

Jim started his career as an assistant prosecuting attorney, and at the age of 28 he became the youngest Prosecuting Attorney in the state. He tried many cases during his career as a prosecutor, and secured a first degree murder conviction in his last trial as Prosecutor. He continued his career with 15 years in private practice, handling a wide range of cases. In 1987 he secured an acquittal for a client charged with double Negligent Homicide as a result of a novel defense predicated on the failure of the victims to use their seat-belts. This case garnered national publicity, and was mentioned in The National Law Journal, The New York Times, CBS News, and many other publications.

Areas Of Practice

- Arbitrators, Mediators & Facilitators
- Commercial & Business Litigation
- Environmental & Real Estate Litigation
- Litigation
- Product Liability & Personal Injury

Education & Credentials

Education

Kettering University

B.S., Industrial Engineering

Wayne State University Law School

J.D.

Bar Admission

Michigan

Acknowledgements

- State bar of Michigan, Michael Franck Award, 2012; In presenting this award, the State Bar said of Jim “As a prosecutor, private attorney, and judge, Fisher’s passion for efficiency, fairness, and respect have earned him praise from lawyers on both sides of the aisle, as well as from those in need, and the indigent.”
- One of two Michigan judges selected by the State Court Administrator to be trained as a trainer in Evidence Based Sentencing Practices at the national Judicial College, 2009
- Recognized by the Michigan Supreme Court for Management Excellence, 1999

Professional Involvement

- Admitted to practice in the Eastern and Western Federal Courts of Michigan, and the 6TH Circuit Court
- Served on the Representative Assembly and Ethics Committee State Bar of Michigan
- Served on the Board of the Michigan Judges Association
- Served on the Judicial Needs Assessment Committee in 2010
- Frequent Lecturer for the Michigan Judicial Institute, in the areas of Sentencing Reform and Court Management
- Established and Ran a very successful Adult Drug Court in his county, which helped many felons avoid prison and become contributing members of society
- Served on the Court Structure committee of the Judicial Crossroads Task Force of the State bar of Michigan

Community Involvement

- Barry County Child Abuse Prevention Council, Incorporator
- Pennock Hospital, Board Member
- Pennock Foundation, Board Member
- YMCA of Barry County, Board Member
- First Presbyterian Church, Board Member
- Main Street Savings Bank, Board Member
- Highpoint Community Bank, Board Member