THE SUPREME COURT

JUSTICES OF THE MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT

	Term expires
ROBERT P. YOUNG, JR., Chief Justice	Jan. 1, 2019
MICHAEL F. CAVANAGH	Jan. 1, 2015
DIANE M. HATHAWAY	Jan. 1, 2017
MARILYN J. KELLY	Jan. 1, 2013
MARY BETH KELLY	Jan. 1, 2019
STEPHEN J. MARKMAN	Jan. 1, 2013
BRIAN K. ZAHRA	Jan. 1, 2015

www.courts.mi.gov/supremecourt

History

Under the **territorial government** of Michigan established in 1805, the supreme court consisted of a chief judge and two associate judges appointed by the President of the United States. Under the "second" grade of territorial government established in 1824, the term of office was limited to four years.

First Grade

Augustus B. Woodward	1805-1824	James Witherell	1805-1824
Frederick Bates	1805-1808	John Griffin	1806-1824

Second Grade

James Witherell	1824-1828	William Woodbridge	1828-1832
John Hunt	1824-1827	George Morrell	1832-1837
Solomon Sibley	1824-1837	Ross Wilkins	1832-1837
Henry Chipman	1827-1832		

The **Constitution of 1835** provided for a supreme court, the judges of which were appointed by the governor, by and with the advice and consent of the senate, for 7-year terms. In 1836 the legislature provided for a chief justice and 2 associate justices. The state was then divided into 3 circuits and the supreme court was required to hold an annual term in each circuit. The Revised Statutes of 1838 provided for a chief justice and 3 associate justices.

The **Constitution of 1850** provided for a term of 6 years and that the judges of the 5 circuit courts be judges of the supreme court. In 1857, the legislature reorganized the supreme court to consist of a chief justice and 3 associate justices to be elected for 8-year terms. The number of justices was increased to 5 by the legislature in 1887. Act 250 of 1903 increased the number of justices to 8.

The **Constitution of 1908** provided for the nomination of the justices at partisan conventions and election at nonpartisan elections.

The **Constitution of 1963** provides that "the judicial power of the state is vested exclusively in one court of justice which shall be divided into one supreme court, one court of appeals, one trial court of general jurisdiction known as the circuit court, one probate court, and the courts of limited jurisdiction that the legislature may establish by a two-thirds vote of the members elected to and serving in each house." Const. 1963, art. 6, § 1.

"The supreme court shall consist of seven justices elected at nonpartisan elections as provided by law. The term of office shall be eight years and not more than two terms of office shall expire at the same time." Const. 1963, art. 6, § 2.

"One justice of the supreme court shall be selected by the court as its chief justice as provided by rules of the court. He shall perform duties required by the court. The supreme court shall appoint an administrator of the courts and other assistants of the supreme court as may be necessary to aid in the administration of the courts of this state. The administrator shall perform administrative duties assigned by the court." Const. 1963, art. 6, § 1.

The Michigan Supreme Court is the highest court in the state, hearing cases appealed to it from other state courts. Applications for "**leave to appeal**" are filed with the supreme court and the court decides whether to grant them. If an application is granted, the supreme court will hear the case; if denied, the decision of the lower court stands.

In addition to its judicial duties, the supreme court is charged with general administrative supervision of all courts in the state. This is referred to in the state constitution as "**general superintending control**." The supreme court is responsible for establishing rules for practice and procedure in all courts.

The supreme court consists of 7 justices. One justice is selected every 2 years by the court as chief justice. Two justices are elected every 2 years (one in the eighth year) in the November election. Although nominated by political parties, the justices are elected on a nonpartisan ballot, separate from the ballot for other elective offices. Candidates for the supreme court must be qualified electors, licensed to practice law in Michigan, and, at the time of election, must be under 70 years of age. The salary of the justices is fixed by the State Officers Compensation Commission and paid by the state.

Administrative Functions

In addition to serving as the state's highest court, the Michigan Supreme Court administers the state court system. The State Court Administrative Office is the Court's administrative agency and oversees Michigan's trial courts under the Supreme Court's direction.

The administrative activities include:

- drafting and promulgating state court rules, rules of evidence, and administrative orders;
- providing continuing education for state judges and court staff;
- overseeing courts' management of their caseloads, including tracking how long courts take to dispose of cases;
- informing the public about the justice system and the judiciary through the Court's Annual Report, the Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center, press releases, and educational events;
- monitoring courts' handling of child welfare cases, including addressing barriers to permanent placements for children;
- overseeing Michigan's friend of the court offices, which enforce court orders regarding child support, parenting time, and child custody;
- providing technological assistance to trial courts that request it;
- developing statewide court networks and databases for tracking case information;
- overseeing drug treatment courts throughout the state;
- improving collections of court-imposed fines, costs, and fees;
- maintaining the "One Court of Justice" website, which links to sites for the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, State Court Administrative Office, Michigan trial courts, Michigan Court Rules, and other sites of interest;
- supporting community centers that provide mediation services and other alternatives to litigation; and
- proposing legislation to improve the administration of justice.