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PUBLIC SERVICE—THE HIGHEST CALLING

*By Former Attorney General Frank J. Kelley,
longest-serving Attorney General in United States History*



Although there were always some percentage of Irish in the earliest population of America, the large influx of Irish did not begin until the Irish potato famine of the 1840s. There was a great wave of Irish immigration into this country from about 1845 through 1875. There was then a second great wave of Irish immigration in the 1880s, a time when Ireland suffered a period of great poverty and starvation once again.

My newly married paternal grandfather and grandmother, Michael and Maria Maloney Kelley, arrived as a young couple in Detroit in 1880 from County Mayo, Ireland. Like all Irish immigrants, they and their families had suffered persecution and oppression from British occupation for hundreds of years.

Few Americans of today realize that in the Ireland from whence the immigrants came there were great restrictions on citizens' rights. For example, you could only go to school for a very limited amount of time unless you swore allegiance to the King of England. Since nobody did, Ireland was kept in a state of bare literacy. The Irish could not become learned, and could not become lawyers or doctors. The right to hold public office was very limited, and the right to vote was also severely limited. It was during this period of oppression that the Irish developed a hunger for the opportunity to learn, to be educated, to have their own learned statesman lead then and govern them.

Hence, it became a maxim among almost all Irish families who were on the one hand very devoted to their Roman Catholic faith, and if one did not have a calling from God for a religious vocation, then the next highest calling for the Irish was to prepare and be involved in public service, the rendering of service to your fellow man. That was preached to Irish families in Ireland during the occupation as their future hope as soon as they could emancipate themselves. That hope or ambition thus became a guiding principle of Irish families who had immigrated to America. Thank God we can vote here. We can be educated here. We can become lawyers. We can become orators and leaders of our people. That was the Irish/American highest goal in their new secular society. It remained for future genera-

IMPORTANT DATES—MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

January 1, 2007— Membership Dues are Due! \$\$\$
Membership Form available at:
<http://referees-association.org/application.html>

RAM Board Meeting Dates
(All meetings at the State Bar Building unless noted)

February 8, 2007, 10:00 a.m.
April 19, 2007, 10:00 a.m.

May 25, 2007—at the Annual RAM Conference
The Perry Hotel, Petoskey

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PUBLIC SERVICE—THE HIGHEST CALLING,

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Therefore, it seemed perfectly natural for me as a child growing up to receive a lecture at the dinner table by my father about some Irish person who had become a public leader, and how that person should be loved and respected by all of us.

In my adult life I checked with many of my Irish/American friends, especially those in high public office. I found the overwhelming majority of them to say that the maxim was all too true. Their fathers had also preached the value of public service to their families. In visits that I had with Robert Kennedy when he was Attorney General, and another time with President John F. Kennedy when he was in Michigan, both confirmed that their father Joseph Kennedy, son of a first generation Boston saloon keeper and himself a Harvard classmate of Franklin Roosevelt, was often to be found preaching public service to the family's expansive dinner table. Both Robert and John Kennedy told me that their father felt that his sons' lives would be judged by how much great public service they had rendered and how much they had tried to help their fellow man.

"[A]merica faces an uncertain future as the number one world power surrounded by dubious friends and too many enemies."

The father Joseph Kennedy practiced what he preached. After leaving Harvard, he became a financial wizard in the stock market and acquired great wealth. Thereupon he devoted his life to public service in such activities as the first Chairman of the Security and Exchange Commission, appointed by President Franklin Roosevelt, to clean up any wrongful practices and unethical conduct on Wall Street. Joseph Kennedy later served as a distinguished Ambassador to Great Britain. He lost favor with President Roosevelt, however, because early on he was not convinced that we should enter World War II. It was a bitter irony that his first born son, Joseph Jr., lost his life as a heroic aviator in World War II.

I was the first born child of my father, Frank E. Kelley, and my mother, Grace Kelley. I was born in Detroit on New Year's Eve, 1924 in the heart of the Roaring 20s of America. The day I was born the Detroit News carried a front page story that Detroit was the richest city in the world. That the average worker in Detroit made the highest wages in recorded history. And, so I remember a little bit of the Roaring 20s and the Flapper Era when I was five or six years old, but I also remember the Great Depression, the eventual recovery, our entry into World War II, the great American victories over Germany and Japan, the post-war boom of the 50s, the real happy days, the brief but romantic Camelot with the election of the first Irish Catholic President John F. Kennedy. His tragic death, the Cold War years, the fall of Communism, the diversions of Korea and Viet Nam, that drained both blood and patriotism, and now I am still here in the 21st Century as America faces an uncertain future as the number one world power surrounded by dubious friends and too many enemies. (Continued on page 3.) →

Missed the last RAM Board Meeting?

Don't be left out of the loop!

Check out the minutes from prior meetings on the RAM website:

<http://www.referees-association.org>



PUBLIC SERVICE—THE HIGHEST CALLING,

Continued from page 2

There never was any doubt in my youth as to what my future would be. I was to become what John Kennedy and the many young Irish Americans wanted to be – a lawyer who should use his or her training to be in public service and help their fellow man.

I was named after my father, and so he would say to me: “Frank, if you become an honest lawyer you won’t have to worry about making or selling a product or acquiring an inventory for you will store away you special knowledge of the law and your experience and people will come to you for your advice and counsel and you will be a chosen leader.” He would close by saying that you would therefore have a happy and satisfying life.

“I was to become what John Kennedy and the many young Irish Americans wanted to be – a lawyer who should use his or her training to be in public service and help their fellow man.”

Fortunately for me, I tried always to please my father and wanted to become a lawyer and hopefully someday a public servant. My father who had limited education practiced what he preached. He was elected to the Detroit School Board in his 20s. He was a member of the Wayne County Board of Supervisors. A life-long Democrat, he was Chairman of the Michigan Delegation to the Democratic National Convention in 1948, the first convention ever televised. I looked at the television and saw my father proclaim nationally that he was casting Michigan’s convention votes for that great commoner, Harry S. Truman. My dad told me that that was his proudest moment as an American citizen.

My father served as well as Chairman of the Board of Wayne County Institutions which managed the state’s largest public hospital mental facility and research institution. When he died the editorial of the Detroit News was typical of what they and other newspapers said of my father, something that he would have loved to hear, the editorial said: “Frank E. Kelley was one of Detroit’s all-time great public servants.

As I look back over my life I feel happy about the fact that I was able to follow my father’s guidance and fulfill my ambition in devoting my life to public service. Like my father, I was a County Commissioner, albeit in northern Michigan, and because I had become a lawyer I was a Public Administrator, a City Attorney for Alpena, Michigan and the Attorney General of my state for thirty-seven years. During my tenure I was Attorney General for five different Governors, and therefore by law was their lawyer. Their names were: John Swainson, George Romney, William Milliken, James Blanchard and John Engler. I knew these men well, and I must tell you that each one was a true public servant, even though they were five diverse personalities with different political philosophies and approaches to government. The overwhelming interest of each was to work to make society better. I never knew one of them to be concerned with pecuniary or selfish interest for themselves. Our democracy is fortunate that we have so many men and women who carry in their mind the desire to give service to the public. I truly enjoyed public service, and my happy memories far exceed any regrets.

I was glad to supply this article to your Referees Quarterly, because all of your members of this association are public servants, and if you didn’t have that desire in you to help your fellow man you would not be engaged in your present work.

In order for a free democracy to flourish, it must be populated by many people who respect the Rule of Law and want a society that provides equality, opportunity and justice to its citizens. You who are referees devote your lives to assisting in providing freedom and justice under law to your fellow man. I salute each and every one of you.



Frank J. Kelley, of Lansing, served as Michigan’s Attorney General from 1961 to 1998, winning election ten times. He also served as president of the National Association of Attorneys General, and served as the chair of the Michigan campaign for Kennedy for President.



The President's Corner

Contributed by Kathy Oemke

One of the most humbling experiences I have had lately is visit to the Supreme Court to address the proposed changes in the Juvenile Court Rules. Many of the changes were in response to federal mandates to preserve Section 4-E funding. To me, other proposed changes seemed to make a system somewhat difficult to navigate in child protection even more cumbersome.

I approached the Michigan Hall of Justice with the usual awe of the system it represents, and of which I have a minute part. The Hall enshrouds one in its shadow as I approach. While climbing the steps, I am mindful of my mission. As the rotating doors whoosh the every day world is shut out. The solemnity of the law is ever-present inside. The friendly greeter checks my ID and the security personnel check me through the gate. They are kind enough to provide me with directions. I take the elevator to the sixth floor. There, I am greeted by another security person who is a little more serious and not quite as friendly. He asks if I have checked in with the clerk. I indicate that I did not; and ask for a means to accomplish that task. I need to go to the fourth floor. There, I enter the clerk's office. One person was there to check me in. I head back to the sixth floor.

The splendor of the view from the sixth floor always amazes me; however, today I was focused on the task at hand. I was directed to the court room as the Justices had just taken the bench. I was expecting to find many participants for this public hearing. The court room was practically empty. I was surprised and amazed at the lack of "public" at the public hearing. I knew I would have two minutes to speak on the issues I had chosen. I thought that I would be in a long line of participants. The first person was called for comment. His point of view was interesting; I listened carefully. He struck me as a complainer. I thought: I hope they don't see me in that light. I was glad I had prepared my remarks timed them and was ready. The next person was called; they did not respond the next person was me! I approached the Justices some of whom I have met at various gatherings individually. The majesty of the seven robed justices is quite a tableau to experience. I was confident and direct. I began my prepared remarks. Justice Corrigan asked a question. I replied carefully. Justice Markman asked a question; I replied thoughtfully. The red light was on; I was finished. I was stunned. I hadn't made the point I had come to make. What could I do? I nodded politely and dutifully returned to my seat. I listened to the request for the remainder of participants in this public hearing. There were no others. The Justices adjourned and the room emptied. I felt unfulfilled.

More lessons learned. I made mental notes of what I would know next time, and how I would be even better prepared. I know to lead with my "right"; to make the most important point first.

As a postscript, the provision in the proposed amendments about which I wished to address the Court was not adopted by the Justices. The system works well in spite of itself.

BYE-BYE...

SO LONG,

FAREWELL!



By Jon T. Ferrier, 17th Circuit Court Family Division

Fans of President Eisenhower's valedictory address wherein he warned of the rise of the military-industrial complex will be disappointed if they harbored hope of finding such eloquence in this, my official Ta-ta to the Referees I have known and loved and to the Referees Association of Michigan, which I helped create. Those readers seeking new material are also apt to be somewhat let down since, in many ways, I've been singing the same song all my career. Should anyone still be reading at this point, I press on in gratitude for your faith, hope and charity.

On August 13, 1981, President Reagan signed the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act into law at the "Western Whitehouse." That Act reduced funding for Legal Aid (where I was working at the time), and also made child and spousal support arrearages non-dischargeable in bankruptcy, among its many provisions. I'll never forget the photo of the President and his pals, sitting outside in a thick fog, signing the bill that would provide the springboard for my career as a Referee.

When I became a Referee, I was initially deployed to hear "welfare show causes." These were domestic relations cases where payers of support had arrearages that were assigned to the State due to children's receipt of public assistance. In those ancient days, only the payer of support was notified of the hearing (speeding things up considerably!), and the payer's only option normally was to bring money, or bring his toothbrush.

Over the years, the scope of my Referee work expanded gradually. Doug Dok and I would conduct "support reviews" in his office, where a payer of child support (payee again not notified) would be invited in to see if Dok and I could cajole the poor sap into coughing up a few more bucks in child support. An additional \$5-\$10 per week was considered success. \$15 extra per week was a coup! Next, the Prosecutor's office starting bringing their child support hearings before us, and with the Coming of Camden in 1985, Referees in Kent County started resembling little phony-baloney Judges more and more.

In 1997, I participated in the planning of the Family Division of the 17th Circuit Court. Referees in these parts had been boasting for years about how we were doing so much of the Court's work that they decided to make us regret our words by having us do even more such work (one's reward in life for a job well done is often more of the job to do).

So our Referees started hearing *pro confesso* divorces, PPO termination motions, property and spousal support issues, on a regular basis. In 2004, with 6 Family Division Judges to pair up with 6 Family Division Referees, the Referees became fully "fungible," meaning that all Referees heard all cases within the jurisdiction of the Family Division – no more "Juvenile Court" and "Domestic Relations" Referees: just "Circuit Court Referees," reflecting our expanded jurisdiction.

About 10 years ago, I began thinking I was beginning to understand how to be a Referee. It involved development (finally!) of skill like being able to look a litigant directly in the eye, no matter what they were saying or how they were saying it; remembering to separate my own, stupid problems from those of the folks coming before me, to avoid taking out my internal pique on them; realizing that even though I still believed I knew more than anyone else in the room, there was no point in *acting* like it (and besides, you'll be dismayed to know that it's occasionally not true!) In short, it involved gaining a lot of experience in the law, learning about human nature, growing up a bit (again, *finally!*), and discovering an unexpected compassion for the families forced to come to me for decisions.

"About 10 years ago, I began thinking I was beginning to understand how to be a Referee."

"Seriously, consider this take on life: it consists of three parts.
1. Childhood and education;
2. Work and family-building;
3. Adulthood. Why should part 3 last any less long than parts 1 and 2?"

BYE-BYE, SO LONG, FAREWELL, continued...

Around 5 years ago, when I could see that I would not forever be able to hold back the expansion of my personal work into the Children's Law field (delinquency, child protection, etc.), I started planning to retire. I had noticed, over the years, that many people who retire seemed to die within a very short time after they stopped working. We had three women in a short span at the old FOC office who died within a year after they retired. Most frightening of all, our former County Controller (now called "Administrator") retired after 28 years of faithful County public service, and he was fishing a stream in Colorado *one month* after he retired when he was struck by a bolt of lightning and killed. Happy Retirement!!

I decided that I would attempt to cheat death by acting like I was retired before I actually put my papers in to wind up the career. I thought that way, at least I would enjoy a few good years before the Grim Reaper came to visit. Those who know me have therefore had to suffer through my Hippie Renaissance, when I grew my hair for a couple of years before finally cutting it off in June of 2005 and giving it to Locks for Love (and thereby keeping my marriage going for a bit longer!) You've had to suffer through my insufferable, overweening ego splashed with the gallons of ink the *Quarterly's* editors have been kind enough to let me spew. You've had to swallow my cynicism, sarcasm and hypocrisy as blathered at countless MJI, ICLE and other seminars over the years, and I can only now say: I'm sure I've been a trial, and I'm sorry for all the noise I have made, and will continue to make.

But here's the thing: Do this, what I am doing, if you can. Get out while you're still young, because tramps like us, baby we were born to run!

Seriously, consider this take on life: it consists of three parts. 1. Childhood and education; 2. Work and family-building; 3. Adulthood. Why should part 3 last any less long than parts 1 and 2? When I ended part 1, I had no clear idea of what would happen in part 2, any more than I do now of what will happen in part 3, but I know this: My "plan" is to strive to be the only thing I've ever wanted to be: a free human being. I was lucky enough to have attended St. John's College in Annapolis, where that's the goal: making free human beings. I'm slowly approaching that ideal.

This year, the State Bar honored me by naming me one of its Champions of Justice. As you may know, Ken Randall had nominated me for both the Frank J. Kelley Distinguished Public Service Award, and the Champ. The Bar picked Judge Doug Hillman and G.R. City Attorney Phil Balkema for the Kelley Award, but decided I was a Champ.

I felt surprisingly burdened by the selection. I mean, what better title could any lawyer possibly hope for than to be called a Champion of Justice? Beats "Distinguished Public Servant" all to hell, as far as I'm concerned. The problem is, if you take the time to review some of the past winners of the Champ, you'll see that I was astoundingly inducted into their company for some mysterious reasons – certainly not because my career can compare with Soapy Williams's, Carole Chiamp's, Judge Damon Keith's, or so many others who have been honored with the award over the past 20 years. The way I felt, if I started thinking that I actually deserved the award, then I probably didn't.

My bent of mind led me to wonder, if I'm a Champion of Justice, who'd I beat to gain the title? Who was the Challenger of Justice? And then it hit me: Justice has many challengers; it needs its many Champions. And to bring back (and hopefully keep in your head all day) the teachings of Freddie Mercury and Queen to all of you: WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS! People like you and me who spend our days in doing what Justice actually is: constantly pursuing it. I'll try it again, hopefully less obscurely: Justice is the never-ending pursuit of itself.

BYE-BYE, SO LONG, FAREWELL, continued...

We do it for any number of reasons. One of my favorites is that this work has never been boring, not once, for more than 25 years – not many lines of work can provide that perk for their practitioners. We do it because we're idealists. We do it because we have healthy egos, and we think we know what we're doing. But mostly I believe we do it because we are True Believers. We think that the peaceful resolution of disputes is a crown jewel of the USA system of government. We think lots of process is due, and we try to provide it. We know that it's not the public's fault that our laws and rules and policies drive them crazy, and we take that into account when discounting their rude behavior. In short, we do it because we're not bad people, really, and we've been given a tremendous opportunity to form our lives and careers into Forces of Light.

Like Keith Moon and Frank Sinatra, I hope I die before I get old (Keith made it, Frank's another story). And if I do, it's OK, because I've had a hell of a life, a hell of a career, and it's largely because people like you, Dear Reader, have made it possible. You've given me a lot of slack, a lot of affection, a lot of support, a lot of just plain Love over the years, and I am so grateful, I can't express it any better than this.

I retire now from the Field of Honor, bloodied, lame, out-of-breath, but still kicking and ready to become an Adult.

I'll be waiting for you, just a little ahead. Come visit me at the Che Guevara Institute of Continuing Philosophy up on Bass Lake in Pierson. We'll look out at the green herons and pileated woodpeckers together and realize that life is beautiful, and we have lived it well.

My Friends, My Fellow Referees: Thanks for everything. My heart has always soared, like the eagle, in your esteemed company. Be seeing you.

JTF, 11/17/06

Happy Retirement, Jon!
(Go ahead, let your hair down!)



Is it Time for SCAO to Study the Need for More Referees?

Contributed by Ken Randall



The Michigan Supreme Court State Court Administrative Office is currently in the process of conducting a “weighted caseload study” to evaluate whether Michigan counties are represented by the proper number of judges. In 2006, court employees from 26 counties participated in a two-month long daily time study to give SCAO the information they need. SCAO will eventually recommend more, fewer or the same number of judges for each county.

Interesting to note is that the time logged by referees in the study is measured toward the need for judges, not referees. This begs the question, should there be a time study to determine the need for more referees in lieu of more judges?

To be sure, SCAO has fine-tuned their judicial formula down to a science, about as exact as one can hope to attain for such a measurement. My raising the question for a longitudinal referee study is not a criticism of the individuals at SCAO, for whom I have high regard, but rather a proposal for a new way of doing business in an era of increasingly tight budget constraints and burgeoning family law dockets.

It is probable that the issue of a referee study has never been contemplated at SCAO. After all, they have traditionally been charged with the duty to evaluate the need for judges, not referees. Moreover, the only group whose radar screen would notice that referee work is not credited to referees in the weighted caseload study would be the Referees’ Association (RAM). To my knowledge, RAM has never approached SCAO on the issue. Finally, referees as a group have never been directly supervised by SCAO.

There really could only be two rationales for using the current judicial study formula, in lieu of researching the need for new referees. Those arguments would be: (1) that’s the way it’s always been done, and (2) judges are funded by State money. As most MBAs would tell you, both of these rationales fail to make good business sense.

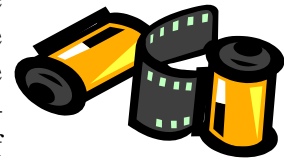


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Is it Time for SCAO to Study the Need for More Referees?

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It is a poor argument to conclude that something is justified merely on the grounds that it is the traditional way of doing things. Students of philosophy know this argument as the “fallacy of traditional wisdom.” Simply put, there may be wisdom in traditional ways of doing things, but it is the merit, not the tradition, that justifies the doing. In business, as in biology, there is evolution; those who adapt survive. Just ask Antonio Perez, the CEO of Eastman Kodak Co. They used to control the camera market; in fact the name “Kodak” is synonymous with cameras, but because they failed to adapt to making digital cameras, they may soon cease making cameras altogether. Business models change all the time out of necessity. In our context, it does not make sense to create more judicial positions if there is a better way of doing business – which may include the creation of more referee positions in lieu of more judges.



As to State funding, referees are far less costly to counties than are judges, notwithstanding the fact that judges are state funded. When a judicial position is created, a large entourage of county-funded employees must surround the judge. Referees do not require an entourage. In fact most referee offices are quite Spartan.



There are other advantages in favoring the creation of more referees in lieu of new judges. Referees choose to go into family law. This is not true for many judges, particularly circuit court judges (Approximately 60% of a circuit judge’s docket is family law.) Also, referees resolve issues much faster than judges. This is important because family law is such a volatile field. Expedient resolution is desirable so families can lessen the strain of heightened emotions (which may lead to less domestic violence, and minimize harm to children) and get on with their post-divorce (or post-relationship) lives. Finally, referees are also more experienced than judges in accommodating growing numbers of pro se litigants.

In recent years SCAO and the Supreme Court with Justice Corrigan have shown remarkable open-mindedness and out-of-the-box thinking in family law. An example of this is the creation of problem-solving courts for child support (See Justice Corrigan’s article on page 1 of the September 2006 *Referees’ Quarterly*. Also see FOC Bureau Director Dan Wright’s article, *The Movement Toward Non-adversarial Proceedings*, on page 5 of the June 2005 edition of *Referees’ Quarterly*.) Given the present climate of creative thinking, one must ask: is it time for SCAO to study the need for more referees?

Ken Randall, Nov 1, 2006



RAM HOLIDAY LUNCH RECAP



On December 14, twenty-four referees from throughout Michigan enjoyed each others' company at a festive holiday lunch. The location for this year was the Redwood Lodge, located in Genesee County just south of Flint. The ceremony was highlighted by the honoring of lifetime memberships to two outstanding referees, and former RAM presidents, Jon Ferrier (Kent County) and Karen Liwienski (Macomb County). Current RAM president, Kathy Oemke, presented plaques to both Jon and Karen.

A board meeting was held prior to the lunch. In the spirit of the holidays, the RAM executive board voted unanimously to extend the funding for the Phil Ingraham Memorial Book Award at the Wayne State University Law School. (**See related article on page 10 of this Quarterly.*)

All referees are invited and encouraged to attend RAM's holiday lunch. If you couldn't make it this year, please try to in 2007.

Happy holidays to all!

Ken Randall
Dec 17, 2006



The RAM Board, taking care of the most important Board business of the meeting: ordering lunch! (l-r) Deb McNabb, Kathy Oemke, Art Spears, Carolyn Jackson, Judah Garber, Ron Foon, Mark Sherbow, Paul Jacokes. (All photos by Ken Randall)

More photos from the Holiday Luncheon (contributed by Ken Randall)



Enjoying lunch by the fireplace

Jon Ferrier hugs Kathy Oemke



Jon and Kathy, all smiles!

Jon's plaque



Jon Ferrier, Deb McNabb, Kathy Oemke, Art Spears



Jon and Kathy sharing a laugh.



Barb Kelly and Art Spears



More photos from the Holiday Luncheon (contributed by Ken Randall)



Paul Jakes and Helen Hartford



Food, Fun, Friendship!



Nancy Thane, Ron Foon, Traci Rink

Ed Messing, Lynne Jakobiak, Elizabeth Belanger



Karen Liwinski and Kathy Oemke, with Karen's Lifetime Membership Award

THE NEW FAMILY SERVICES DIVISION AT SCAO



Contributed by Daniel Wright

In September 2006, the State Court Administrative Office merged the Friend of the Court Bureau with Child Welfare Services to form the Family Services Division.

The leadership positions within the new division are:

Daniel Wright.....Director
Steven Capps.....Deputy Director
Carol Siemon.....Manager, Training and Development
James Novell.....Manager, Foster Care Review Board
Kelly Howard.....Legislative Liaison

The FSD already has expanded its staff, by hiring two lawyers from the Legislature to serve as management analysts, Erin House (child welfare) and Angela Sorrells (child support).

Like the old saying that necessity is the mother of invention, this reorganization was conceived as the only feasible solution to the departure of former CWS Director Kathryn O'Grady. Not only was O'Grady the most knowledgeable child welfare advocate at the Supreme Court, she also was the architect of SCAO's child welfare program, which began with her hiring in 2003. O'Grady could not be replaced with one person, so SCAO decided to try to replace her with a division.

The broad goals of the merger are to centralize legislative advocacy for child support and child welfare, to coordinate funding strategies, to simplify dialogue with federal officials, to improve collaboration with the Michigan Department of Human Services, and to strengthen SCAO's relationship with family division referees.

The last objective has been too long in coming. Over the years, juvenile and family court referees have become increasingly frustrated with the effects of SCAO's tripartite handling of referee issues: Trial Court Services for juvenile courts, Friend of the Court Bureau for family courts and Child Welfare Services for probate courts. This anomaly was a major topic at the April 20, 2006, meeting of RAM's Board of Directors, when invited guests Dan Wright and Steve Capps promised to begin advocating for a better system.

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THE NEW FAMILY SERVICES DIVISION AT SCAO

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The creation of the Family Services Division is a big step in that direction. Although juvenile court matters such as abuse/neglect and delinquency still belong to Trial Court Services, SCAO and RAM have agreed that Dan Wright and Jennifer Warner, the TCS Analyst assigned to the juvenile courts, will begin attending RAM Board Meetings together so that SCAO's understanding of referee issues will be singular and more complete and communication with the family division referees will be more consistent.

The hope is that the unification of SCAO's work with referees will lead to harmonization of the statutes and court rules that govern referee hearings and practices. That will take time, but at least the journey has begun. - - Dan Wright

RAM Offers New Litmus Test for Elections

...Contributed by Ken Randall



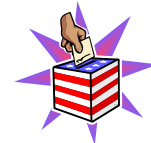
Political analysts routinely study statistics and odd correlations when predicting elections. Most of us recognize the saying "As New Hampshire goes, so goes the nation." In fact, one precinct in New Hampshire has correctly predicted the popular vote in every election since George Washington. This is why exit polls in such locales are of such political interest.



And there are also the seemingly odd indicators; correlations that seem ridiculous on first blush but nonetheless are remarkably accurate. For example, Americans usually vote for the taller candidate, or the Washington Redskins football season usually correlates with which party will win.

For those who enjoy such political oddities, there is now another source to consider – The *Referees' Quarterly*. Of the five political authors who submitted articles to the Quarterly since its 2005 inception, all five won election – 100%! Those candidates include: Governor Jennifer Granholm (Dem), Senator Debbie Stabenow (Dem), Congressman Dave Camp (Rep), Attorney General Mike Cox (Rep) and Michigan Supreme Court Justice Corrigan (Non-partisan).

No doubt George Stephanopoulos has already considered this trend.



Ken Randall
Dec 17, 2006

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Any omissions or errors?
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