



Table of Contents

President's Letter—West Michigan Federal Court Association	1
Recap of Recent Events: Serving our membership.....	2
Call for Articles	3
District Court Roundup	4
Appellate Roundup	7
Help Wanted—Pro Bono Trial Attorneys for Prisoner Civil Rights Cases	9
Interested in the Court's History?	9
2026 Jury Trial Verdicts	10
Special Thanks.....	12

President's Letter—West Michigan Federal Court Association

Amy E. Murphy, President, 2025-2026

I'm proud to report that the West Michigan Federal Court Association has had a very good year. In 2026, we voted to restructure our organization. With that restructuring came a new name—the FCA—and a renewed commitment to our mission: *upholding a high standard for the federal judiciary and the attorneys who appear before it and encouraging friendly relations among the members of the legal profession*. That mission depends on our broad membership of prosecutors, public defenders, government counsel, attorneys in private practice, solo practitioners, and judges.

Under our new banner, we delivered excellent programming. We hosted our annual Supreme Court Review and Preview, featuring Amanda Rauh-Bieri (Miller Johnson), Charlie Quigg (Warner Norcross + Judd), and Marcus Miller (Federal Defender's Office). The Hillman Committee, chaired by Janet Ramsey (Whirlpool), put on an excellent trial advocacy program, attended by 58 lawyers and led by a faculty of experienced practitioners. Along with the Grand Rapids Bar Association, we hosted a Meet the Judges panel, featuring Judge Beckering, Judge Vermaat, Judge Redford, and Judge Distel.

My personal highlight was our East/West mixer held at MSU College of Law and cosponsored by the US Courts Committee. Judge McKeague and Judge Jonker led a lively discussion of AI and shared their insights with an audience of practitioners, fellow judges, and law students.

At these programs, we learn from each other and gain a deeper appreciation of the many facets of the federal practice. Having practiced in several districts, I am particularly struck by the support of the judges in the Western District and Sixth Circuit, who are eager to join us and contribute their thoughts. Their involvement makes for a more meaningful practice.

We will cap off this year at the Annual Meeting on October 14, with keynote speaker Gregg Nunziata, who leads the Society for the Rule of Law. At the meeting, I will hand the baton to my friend Rachel Frank (Rachel Frank Law), a longtime board member. The FCA is in good hands.

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<https://wmfca.org/>

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It has been my privilege to lead the FCA, which has been a source of mentorship and friendship for me. May the FCA continue to foster these relationships, which make the Western District of Michigan a special place to practice law.



Amy E. Murphy is the 2026 president of the West Michigan Federal Court Association. She is an attorney at Miller Johnson, where she has a multifaceted litigation practice.

Recap of Recent Events: Serving our membership

By Crystal Bultje

During this past year, the West Michigan Federal Court Association organized and sponsored the following events:

Meet the Judges Happy Hour—March 11

Along with the Grand Rapids Bar Association, we cohosted a Meet the Judges Happy Hour at Founders Brewing Company on March 11, 2026. Judges Maarten Vermaat, James Redford, Jane Beckering, and Michael Distel participated in a lively discussion moderated by James Fisher and Dick Hillary. The conversation ranged from the judges' favorite books and the careers they might have pursued outside the law to their perspectives on several timely legal topics.

East/West Mixer—April 20

Practitioners from both sides of the state, law students, and members of the judiciary gathered at the Michigan State University College of Law on April 20, 2026 for our East/West Mixer. The event was presented in collaboration with the United States Courts Committee of the State Bar of Michigan.

The program featured a discussion titled "Legal Ethics in a Moment of Transformational Technological Change," with Judge Robert Jonker of the United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan and Judge David McKeague of the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, moderated by MSU Law Professor Elise Maizel. Thank you to our speakers, Professor Maizel, MSU Law, and everyone who joined us from across the state!

Continued on next page

Recap of Recent Events

Continued from page 2

Women's Suit Swap—May 6

The Federal Court Association joined the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan and the Women's White Collar Defense Association for a Women's Suit Swap on May 6, 2026. Hosted by Miller Johnson, the event brought professional women together to enjoy a wonderful evening together while shopping one another's thoughtfully selected professional clothing.

POWER Act Program—May 20

The United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan and the West Michigan Federal Court Association presented a virtual POWER Act program on May 20, 2026, hosted by the United States District Court for the Northern District of New York. The Pro Bono Work to Empower and Represent Act encourages federal district courts to hold annual programs promoting pro bono legal services for victims and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Crypto 101 for Lawyers—May 21

The West Michigan Federal Court Association and the Michigan Chapter of the Women's White Collar Defense Association hosted "Crypto 101 for Lawyers" on May 21, 2026. Presentations were provided by Anne Walton, a financial-crimes expert, and Will Conley, a Michigan attorney whose practice has focused on emerging technologies, particularly blockchain and cryptocurrency. The presentations prompted a lively discussion and question-and-answer session. Thank you to our speakers and everyone who joined us to learn more about this rapidly developing area of law!

Past Presidents Happy Hour—August 19

The Federal Court Association officers, past presidents of the organization, and members of the Court gathered on Miller Johnson's rooftop on August 19 for a Past Presidents Happy Hour. Guests enjoyed drinks, appetizers, and a lovely

summer evening together. Thank you to Miller Johnson for hosting and to our past presidents for their continued service and involvement in the FCA!

Upcoming Annual Meeting and Luncheon—October 14

The West Michigan Federal Court Association's Annual Meeting and Luncheon will take place at noon on Wednesday, October 14, 2026, at the City Flats Hotel Ballroom. We are excited to welcome Gregg Nunziata as this year's featured speaker.

Gregg is an attorney, public-policy professional, and veteran of the conservative legal movement. He previously served as Chief Nominations Counsel to the Senate Judiciary Committee, policy counsel to the Senate Republican Policy Committee, and general counsel and domestic-policy adviser to Senator Marco Rubio. Earlier in his career, he served in the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division and practiced as a litigator at an international law firm. He now serves as Executive Director of the Society for the Rule of Law and regularly provides legal and political commentary in national media.

We hope you will join us for this year's meeting and luncheon!

Upcoming Supreme Court Review

Our always-popular Supreme Court Review program will return soon. Please watch for additional details!



Crystal Bultje is a 2026 Vice President of Programs of the West Michigan Federal Court Association. Crystal is a shareholder at Pinsky Smith, PC.

Call for Articles

Interested in contributing to Bar & Bench? We invite you to draft an article on a subject of interest to federal practitioners in the Western District of Michigan. Please contact our editor, Herman Hofman, at hdhofman@varnumlaw.com for more information.

District Court Roundup

By C.J. Schneider

Antol v. English

No. 25-2054 (6th Cir. Aug. 13, 2026)

Property owner brought a § 1983 action against Michigan State Police officers alleging unlawful search and excessive force under the Fourth Amendment. Officers had executed a search warrant at plaintiff's Muskegon County residence in connection with suspected illegal marijuana operations at his smoke shop. Plaintiff challenged the sufficiency of the warrant affidavit and claimed that officers used unreasonable force during the search, including denying his repeated requests to use his own restroom, which forced him to urinate in his front yard. The District Court (Jonker, J.) granted the officers' motion to dismiss for failure to state a claim.

The Sixth Circuit (Clay, J.) affirmed dismissal of the unlawful search claim, finding that the warrant affidavit retained sufficient probable cause even after excising the allegedly false statements. The court reversed dismissal of the unreasonable seizure claim against Officer Josephs, however, holding that the plaintiff sufficiently alleged a Fourth Amendment violation and that the right was clearly established—any reasonable officer would have recognized that permitting supervised restroom use would not jeopardize the search. The court affirmed dismissal of the Fourteenth Amendment substantive due process claim as duplicative of the Fourth Amendment claim. Judge Nalbandian concurred in part and dissented in part, arguing under an originalist analysis that the seizure did not violate the Fourth Amendment.

This decision clarifies the limits of force during search warrant execution, particularly regarding basic human dignity needs, and practitioners should note that denying basic biological needs during a search can constitute an unreasonable seizure even where the underlying search is lawful.

J. Nicholas Bostic, Lansing, MI, for Appellant.

Tyler R. Kitzmiller, Office of the Michigan Attorney General, Lansing, MI, for Appellees.

Dannah v. City of Grand Rapids, Michigan

176 F.4th 923 (6th Cir. May 29, 2026)

Passenger brought a § 1983 excessive force action arising from a traffic stop in Grand Rapids. During a frisk, plaintiff Dannah repeatedly moved his hands to his waistband despite commands to place them on his head, then broke away from Officer Kaiser mid-frisk and attempted to run. Officers

tackled Dannah and used physical force—including punches, arm-yanking, and body pressure—until he was handcuffed.

The Sixth Circuit (Sutton, C.J.) reversed the district court's denial of qualified immunity, holding that no clearly established law prohibited the officers' use of force given Dannah's active, physical resistance. The court emphasized that the force ended once Dannah was handcuffed, the takedown neutralized a reasonably perceived threat, and the punches and yanking were no greater imposition than a typical tasing. The court distinguished *LaPlante v. City of Battle Creek* (no escalating resistance) and *Grawey v. Drury* (unconscious suspect).

This is an important qualified immunity decision for local law enforcement, reinforcing that escalating physical resistance during a frisk permits increasing exercises of force, and that the absence of weapons or drugs found post-arrest does not retroactively render the frisk or subsequent force unreasonable.

Sarah J. Hartman, Elizabeth J. Fossel, Grand Rapids Department of Law, Grand Rapids, MI, for Appellants.

Michael L. Jones, Marko Law, PLLC, Detroit, MI, for Appellee.

Lopez-Campos v. Raycraft

175 F.4th 713 (6th Cir. May 11, 2026)

Consolidated appeal involving habeas corpus petitions by noncitizens detained without bond hearings under 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(2)(A). Petitioners were citizens of Mexico, El Salvador, Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Guatemala who had resided in the United States for years after entering without inspection.

The Sixth Circuit (Clay, J.) affirmed the district courts' grants of habeas relief, holding that § 1225(b)(2)(A)'s mandatory detention applies only to noncitizens who are actively "seeking admission"—that is, seeking lawful entry via inspection. Noncitizens who entered without inspection and are not affirmatively seeking admission fall under § 1226's permissive detention scheme. The court distinguished between an "applicant for admission" under § 1225(a)(1) and one who is "seeking admission" under § 1225(b)(2)(A) and held that the Due Process Clause entitled petitioners to individualized bond hearings given their significant time in the U.S. interior. The court noted the government's 29-year practice of applying § 1226(a) to this group as "powerful evidence"

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District Court Roundup

Continued from page 4

supporting this reading. Judge Murphy dissented, siding with the Fifth and Eighth Circuits.

This is a significant immigration detention decision joining a deepening circuit split and directly impacting immigration practice in the Western District by requiring bond hearings for long-term interior residents detained under § 1225(b)(2)(A). Practitioners should watch for potential Supreme Court review.

Benjamin Hayes, Jesse D. Lorenz, United States Department of Justice, Washington, DC, for Appellants.

My Khanh Ngo, Michael K.T. Tan, American Civil Liberties Union Foundation, San Francisco, CA, Miriam J. Aukerman, Marty Berger, American Civil Liberties Union Fund of Michigan, Grand Rapids, MI, Judy Rabinovitz, American Civil Liberties Union Foundation, New York, NY, Ramis J. Wadood, Philip Mayor, Bonsitu Kitaba-Gaviglio, American Civil Liberties Union Fund of Michigan, Detroit, MI, Russell Reid Abrutyn, Abrutyn Law PLLC, Southfield, MI, for Appellees.

United States v. Benson

179 F.4th 470 (6th Cir. June 24, 2026)

The United States sued Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson and the State of Michigan, seeking to compel production of the state's unredacted voter registration list—the “qualified voter file” containing driver's license numbers,

dates of birth, and partial social security numbers—under Title III of the Civil Rights Act of 1960, the National Voter Registration Act (“NVRA”), and the Help America Vote Act (“HAVA”). Michigan Alliance for Retired Americans and two registered voters intervened as defendants.

The Sixth Circuit (Mathis, J.) affirmed dismissal, holding that Michigan's qualified voter file did not “come into” the Secretary's “possession” under Title III because state officials created and maintained the database themselves rather than acquiring it from a third party. The court further held that subjecting the voter file to Title III would conflict with the NVRA and HAVA, which require election officials to routinely alter the list to ensure accuracy. The surplusage canon confirmed a narrow reading, and the government also failed to comply with § 20703's procedural requirement to submit a demand containing both the basis and purpose of its request. The court rejected deference to a DOJ Office of Legal Counsel opinion issued the day before oral argument and 66 years after Title III's enactment. Judge Nalbandian dissented, arguing that the voter file's constituent individual records satisfied Title III's requirements.

This is a high-profile election law decision with national implications, establishing that state-created voter registration databases are not “records [that] come into possession” of election officers under Title III.

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District Court Roundup

Continued from page 5

David N. Goldman, Andrew G. Braniff, Jesus A. Osete, United States Department of Justice, Washington, DC, for Appellant.

Heather S. Meingast, Erik A. Grill, Office of the Michigan Attorney General, Lansing, MI, for Defendants-Appellees.

Aria C. Branch, Joshua C. Abbuhl, Branden D. Lewiston, Derek A. Zeigler, Elias Law Group LLP, Washington, DC, Sarah Prescott, Salvatore Prescott Porter & Porter, Northville, MI, for Intervenor-Appellees.

***Fifth Third Bank, N.A. v. Whitney Holdings, LLC* No. 1:25-cv-1350 (W.D. Mich. July 6, 2026)**

Commercial lending dispute in which Fifth Third Bank sued Whitney Holdings for breach of a \$965,000 loan. Whitney Holdings failed to pay the outstanding balance after Fifth Third declined to extend the maturity date. Defendants filed an answer with eleven affirmative defenses but failed to respond to the summary judgment motion.

The Court (Chief Judge Jarbou) granted summary judgment in part, finding all three elements of breach of the promissory note proven—contract existence, breach, and damages of \$961,916.41 in principal plus \$55,614.14 in accrued interest. The court also entered a declaratory judgment entitling Fifth Third to foreclose on the collateral—three cargo vans—under UCC Article 9. However, the court denied

the claimed attorney's fees because Fifth Third's counsel failed to provide sufficient detail—no hours, rates, task descriptions, or experience information—to assess reasonableness under the factors set for in *Zeeland Farm Services v. JBL Enterprises*.

This decision is a practical reminder for commercial litigators on two fronts: first, although failing to respond to a summary judgment motion does not constitute default, affirmative defenses cannot survive summary judgment without evidence to support them; and second, contractual attorney fee provisions require detailed documentation; a bare declaration stating that fees are “reasonable and customary” is insufficient.

Brian Boyd, Dinsmore & Shohl LLP, Troy, MI, for Plaintiff.

Rachelle Lynn Miller, Cardelli Lanfear PC, Troy, MI, Jorge A. Garcia-Menocal, Garcia-Menocal Irias & Pastori, LLP, Coral Gables, FL, for Defendants.



C.J. Schneider is a member at Miller Johnson in Grand Rapids. He practices in commercial crisis counseling and litigation, helping businesses and nonprofit organizations successfully navigate high-profile matters, including mass tort claims, high-stakes contract disputes, global supply chain emergencies, and corporate governance reform.

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Appellate Roundup

Noteworthy Cases from the Sixth Circuit

By Neil E. Youngdahl

Halbower v. Hiscox Syndicate 33 of Lloyd's of London, **No. 25-1152 (6th Cir. May 29, 2026)**

This insurance dispute presented an unusual question of subject-matter jurisdiction involving unincorporated associations. A trust sued its insurer, Hiscox Syndicate 33, for breach of an art-insurance policy. Judge Jonker dismissed the action on the merits, but the Sixth Circuit took a different course, vacating the dismissal and remanding for jurisdictional discovery on subject-matter jurisdiction.

In an opinion by Judge Readler, joined by Judge Stranch, the Court explained that an insurance syndicate like Hiscox is an unincorporated association whose citizenship, for diversity purposes, is determined by the citizenship of each of its constituents. Because Hiscox's notice of removal to federal court did not establish the citizenship of Hiscox's constituents, the Sixth Circuit remanded for the district court to conduct further jurisdictional discovery on that question. Judge Bush concurred in the result.

Kevin K. Russell of Goldstein, Russell & Woofter LLC, and Ronald G. DeWaard and Brion B. Doyle of Varum LLP, represented Plaintiff-Appellant. Alexander W. Ross and Clinton E. Cameron of Clyde & Co US LLP represented Defendant-Appellee.

United States v. Benson

No. 26-1225 (6th Cir. June 24, 2026)

In this significant election-law decision, the Sixth Circuit affirmed Chief Judge Jarbou's dismissal of the federal govern-

ment's suit seeking to compel Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson to produce the state's unredacted qualified voter file. Writing for the majority, Judge Mathis, joined by Judge Cole, held that the federal government's attempt to compel turnover failed for two reasons. First, the Court concluded that Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1960 only required Secretary Benson to provide records that had "come into" her possession and that the voter role did not fall within this category of document because it is internally created. Drawing on contemporaneous dictionary definitions, the majority reasoned that the phrase "come into . . . possession" connotes acquiring or receiving something from a third party, not creating it internally. The Court illustrated the point with an analogy offered at oral argument: a baker "comes into" possession of ingredients purchased at a grocery store but does not "come into" possession of the cakes she bakes from them. The Court held that the statutory context confirmed this reading because the enumerated records—applications, registrations, and poll-tax receipts—are all items that voters submit to election officers, not databases that officials compile themselves. The Court further noted that reading the statute to cover the qualified voter file would create tension with § 20702's criminal prohibition on altering retained records, because the NVRA and HAVA affirmatively require election officials to update voter files routinely. Second, the Court held that the Attorney General's demands failed to satisfy the procedural requirements

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Appellate Roundup

Continued from page 7

of 52 U.S.C. § 20703, which requires that a demand “contain a statement of the basis and the purpose therefor.”

Judge Nalbandian dissented. The full Sixth Circuit later denied the federal government’s petition for en banc review.

David N. Goldman, Andrew G. Braniff, and Jesus A. Osete of the United States Department of Justice represented the United States. Heather S. Meingast and Erik A. Grill of the Office of the Michigan Attorney General represented Defendants-Appellees. Aria C. Branch, Joshua C. Abbuhl, Branden D. Lewiston, and Derek A. Ziegler of Elias Law Group LLP and Sarah Prescott of Salvatore Prescott Porter & Porter represented Intervenor-Appellees.

***Gomez-Echeverria v. Purpose Point Harvesting, LLC*, No. 25-2080 (6th Cir. Aug. 28, 2026)**

The Sixth Circuit unanimously affirmed a judgment entered after an eight-day jury trial in favor of five Guatemalan citizens who had worked as seasonal agricultural laborers for Purpose Point Harvesting, LLC and its owners. Judge Beckering presided over the trial. The plaintiffs alleged that defendants charged illegal recruitment fees of \$2,500 per year, failed to pay agreed wages, subjected them to squalid living conditions, restricted their freedom, and threatened deportation. The jury returned a verdict for plaintiffs on claims under the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA), the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), the Michigan Workforce Opportunity Wage Act, the Michigan

Human Trafficking Victims Compensation Act, and state contract law, awarding \$105,000 in compensatory damages and \$450,000 in punitive damages. The district court additionally awarded \$803,352.50 in attorneys’ fees and \$101,281.20 in costs.

In an opinion by Judge Griffin, joined by Judges Batchelder and Mathis, the Court first rejected defendants’ principal argument on appeal: the punitive damages award was unconstitutional under the three-guidepost framework of *BMW of North America, Inc. v. Gore*, 517 U.S. 559 (1996). On reprehensibility, defendants argued that the jury’s decision not to award noneconomic damages foreclosed a finding of sufficient reprehensibility. The Court disagreed, holding that it has never conditioned punitive damages on a jury’s award of noneconomic damages and emphasizing that a TVPRA claim inherently carries a high degree of reprehensibility given its requirement of knowing conduct involving force, fraud, or coercion. The trial evidence—including illegal recruitment fees, wage theft, destruction of payroll records, squalid housing, and threats of deportation—amply supported the award.

On the ratio guidepost, the Court found the aggregate 4.3-to-1 ratio of punitive to compensatory damages “rather modest,” and noted that each plaintiff’s individual ratio fell in the single digits, well within the range the Supreme Court has indicated is “more likely to comport with due process.” Only one plaintiff’s ratio approached double digits (1:9.5), and the evidence of

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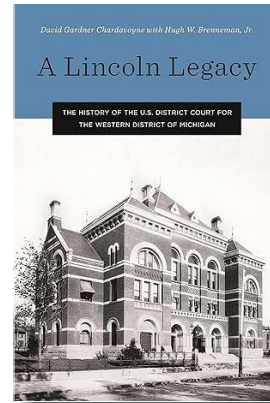
his injuries and need to flee defendants supported that variance. On the third guidepost—comparable civil and criminal sanctions—the Court observed that Department of Labor regulations impose per-violation civil penalties of up to \$7,289 for willful H-2A violations, and the TVPRA carries criminal penalties of up to 20 years’ imprisonment and fines of \$250,000 for individuals and \$500,000 for organizations. The individual punitive awards of approximately \$90,000 each were well below these potential penalties, giving defendants fair notice.

The Court also rejected defendants’ remaining challenges. It upheld the district court’s denial of a mistrial arising from a witness’s courtroom comments about a former romantic partner whom defendants allegedly brought to intimidate him, finding the comments were isolated, comprised only ten questions of the eight-day trial, and were cured by a specific jury instruction striking the testimony. The Court affirmed the exclusion of approximately 80 proposed defense witnesses who had no direct knowledge of defendants’ treatment of the five plaintiffs, holding the testimony was irrelevant under Rule 401 and substantially more prejudicial than probative under Rule 403. On a statute-of-limitations defense, the Court found that defendants had misidentified which plaintiffs brought which claims and, as to the one claim properly challenged, had waived the defense by failing to raise it in their first responsive pleading. The Court further rejected defendants’ argument regarding forum non conveniens, holding that defendants failed to establish Guatemala as an adequate alternative forum because they offered only unsupported, conclusory assertions about Guatemalan legal remedies. Finally, because it found no individual errors, the Court rejected the cumulative-error argument.

Robert Anthony Alvarez of Avanti Law Group, PLLC represented Defendants-Appellants. Jessica Mugler and Kenya K. Davis of Boies, Schiller & Flexner, LLP, and Teresa Hendricks of Migrant Legal Aid, Inc., represented Plaintiffs-Appellees.



Neil Youngdahl is a commercial litigator and appellate attorney at Varnum LLP.



Interested in the Court’s History?

A Lincoln Legacy: The History of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Michigan by David Gardner Chardavoyne with Hugh W. Brenneeman Jr. provides the first and

only comprehensive examination of the history of the federal courts in the Western District of Michigan. Copies may be purchased in the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum Store in Grand Rapids.

Help Wanted—Pro Bono Trial Attorneys for Prisoner Civil Rights Cases

Each year, members of our chapter represent prison inmates whose civil rights claims have survived summary judgment and are headed to trial. The district court is again looking for attorneys to accept



pro bono appointments in this worthwhile program. The Western District’s prisoner civil rights pro bono program presents an excellent opportunity for trial work, without lengthy discovery. We encourage our members—and especially our young lawyers, for whom trial experience can be hard to find—to participate. The link to the Court’s Pro Bono Plan is: <https://www.miwd.uscourts.gov/sites/miwd/files/Pro%20Bono%20Guidelines.pdf>.

If you would like to learn more or volunteer, please email stephanie_carpenter@miwd.uscourts.gov, and either Stephanie Carpenter or Judge Ray Kent can tell you about the process.

2026 Jury Trial Verdicts

United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan

VERDICT DATE	CASE NUMBER/NAME/TYPE	JUDGE	ATTORNEYS	JURY VERDICT
2/3/2026	1:22-cv-1216 Schiefel #495212 v. Barton (Prisoner civil rights)	Jarbou	Paul Matouka – P James E. Keathley - D	Verdict for Defendant
2/20/2026	1:21-cv-1052 Ruiz, et al. v. Strbich (Medical malpractice)	Jonker	Euel Kinsey – P Jasmine Marchwinski, Marcy R. Matson, Susan A. Garver - D	Verdict for Defendant
3/26/2026	1:22-cv-891 Rose #235893 v. Cope, et al. (Prisoner civil rights)	Maloney	Ronald G. DeWaard, Shelby Martinie – P Kristin M. Southerland, Adam P. Sadowski, Michael R. Dean – D	Verdict for Defendants
4/16/2026	1:25-cr-144 USA v. Morales (Possession with intent to distribute controlled substances) (2 counts)	Maloney	Alexia Jansen, Daniel McGraw, Stephanie Carowan – USA Donald Sappanos, James Fisher, Eric Fleddermann - D	Verdict – Guilty Ct.1, Not Guilty Ct. 2
4/23/2026	1:23-cv-759 Smith #619752 v. Rykse et al (Prisoner civil rights)	Jarbou	Andrew Sullivan – P Doaa Al-Howaishy, James Keathley, Jennifer Foster, Joseph Ho - D	Verdict for Plaintiff \$5,000 Punitive \$30,000 Compensatory
4/28/2026	1:23-cv-972 Acosta v. Muskegon Heights, City of et al (Civil rights)	Beckering	Darcie Brault – P Charles Bogren, Evan Irvine, Te D. Smith, James Lamb - D	Verdict for Defendants
5/7/2026	1:25-cr-160 USA v. Fisher (Disaster assistance fraud)	Jarbou	Nils Kessler, Julie Rugg – USA Patrick Hecker, Tessa Muir – D	Verdict – Guilty
6/4/2026	1:25-cr-147 USA v. Lambert (Possession with intent to distribute cocaine)	Jonker	Vito S. Solitro, Stephanie M. Carowan – USA James Fisher, Eric Fleddermann – D	Verdict – Guilty

Continued on next page

2026 Jury Trial Verdicts

Continued from page 9

VERDICT DATE	CASE NUMBER/NAME/TYPE	JUDGE	ATTORNEYS	JURY VERDICT
6/24/2026	1:23-cv-449 Tamm, et al. v. Nerad (Civil rights – real property)	Beckering	Philip L. Ellison, Thomas J. Lambert, Jr. – P Bogomir Rajsic, III, Craig R. Noland – D	Verdict for Plaintiffs Compensatory - \$1.00 Punitive - \$2,000 each
7/8/2026	1:26-cr-41 USA v. Sinclair (Possessing contraband in prison)	Jonker	Hanna Rutkowski, Richard Stiffler – USA Daniel R. Fagan – D	Verdict - Guilty
8/4/2026	1:25-cr-58 USA v. Scott-Ware (Sexual exploitation of a child)	Jarbou	Austin Hakes, Constance Turnbull, Jonathan Roth – USA Geoffrey Upshaw – D	Verdict - Guilty
8/7/2026	1:22-cv-1075 Parker #593090 v. Tenhov (Prisoner civil rights)	Maloney	Katherine Smith Kennedy – P Adam Sadowski, Sara Trudgeon – D	Verdict for Defendant
8/11/2026	1:23-cv-524 Payne #650743 v. Alviar, et al. (Prisoner civil rights)	Jarbou	Scott Payne #650743 – In Pro Per Scott Nichol – D	Verdict for Defendants
8/12/2026	1:25-cv-35 Silvia v. Inova Federal Credit Union (Employment discrimination)	Jonker	William F. Piper – P Matthew Jankowski, Cameron Huffman – D	Verdict for Defendant
8/19/2026	1:24-cr-177 USA v. Dunson (Possession with intent to distribute cocaine, conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute controlled substance, felon in possession of firearm) (8 counts)	Beckering	Daniel McGraw, Alexis Sanford, Julia Rugg – USA Geoffrey Upshaw - D	Verdict – Guilty (Cts. 1, 3-8), Not Guilty (Ct. 2)
9/4/2026	1:24-cv-280 Culberson #727861 v. Shinabargar, et al. (Prisoner civil rights)	Green	Thomas Christian, Jared Christensen, Reebehl El-Hage – P Christopher Alex – D	Verdict – For Defendants



PO Box 2303

Grand Rapids, MI 49501

Special Thanks

Thank you to the following volunteers who contributed their time and efforts to our programming and membership efforts:

- Daniel Brookins of Warner Norcross + Judd / US Courts Committee Representative
- Alexandra Page of Rosati Schultz Joppich & Amtsbuechler / Young Lawyers Committee Chair
- Constance Turnbull of U.S. Attorney's Office, WDMI / Young Lawyers Committee Chair
- Janet Ramsay of Whirlpool / Hillman Program Chair
- Kathy Smith Kennedy of Pinsky Smith / Bench Bar Chair
- Matt Borgula of SBBL Law / Historical Society President
- Todd Almassian of Keller & Almassian / Bankruptcy Section Liaison
- The Honorable Clay M. West of the 17th Circuit Court / US Courts Committee
- The devoted members of the Hillman and Bench Bar committees