



## DISTRICT COURTS OF KENT COUNTY

63<sup>rd</sup> District Court-Kent County

### MEDIA ADVISORY

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### District Courts of Kent County to Celebrate 50th Anniversary of Michigan's District Court System

**What:** Special event to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the district court system in Michigan. Chief Judge Sara J. Smolenski (63<sup>rd</sup>), Chief Judge William G. Kelly (62-B Kentwood), other judges of the District Courts of Kent County, and honored guests will gather to mark the occasion.

**When:** Friday, January 11, 2019; 3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Remarks to begin at approximately 4:15 p.m.

**Where:** 63<sup>rd</sup> District Court, 1950 East Beltline NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525

**Who:** Chief Judge Sara J. Smolenski (63<sup>rd</sup>), Chief Judge William G. Kelly (62-B Kentwood) and other judges of the District Courts of Kent County

**Why:** As required by the 1963 Michigan Constitution, legislation passed in 1968 to create our district court system which replaced justices of the peace and municipal courts. The effective date was June 17, 1968, and most courts began operation on January 1, 1969. The district court is often referred to as "The People's Court" because the public has more contact with the district court than with any other court in the state and many people go to district court without an attorney.

The district court has exclusive jurisdiction over all civil claims for damages up to \$25,000, small claims (damages up to \$6,000), landlord-tenant disputes, land contract disputes, and civil infractions. The court may also conduct marriages in a civil ceremony. Additionally, it handles a wide range of criminal proceedings, including most misdemeanors, for which the maximum possible penalty does not exceed one year in jail. Typical misdemeanor offenses include driving under the influence of intoxicants or on a suspended license, simple assault, shoplifting, and possession of small amounts of marijuana. Lastly, district courts also conduct preliminary examinations in felony cases, after which, if the prosecutor provides sufficient proofs, the felony case is transferred to the circuit court for arraignment and trial.

Further historical information is available on the [Michigan District Judges Association 50th Anniversary page](#).