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Michigan

January 27, 2011

State Bar: Courts are inefficient

DETROIT (AP) — Michigan's court system operates under a 19th-century model and needs to be overhauled at a time when the population is shrinking and tax dollars are scarce, lawyers and judges said Wednesday as they recommended changes.

A task force created by the State Bar of Michigan acknowledged that some of its proposals would cost millions, but argued they would save money in the years ahead. The group said "radical change" is not needed but noted that the state's 83-county court system is so fragmented that it's impossible to collect critical data to identify all areas for improvement.

"Our patchwork quilt of overlapping responsibilities, funding and reporting too often results in duplication of effort and costs, widely disparate workloads and confusion," the task force said in its report.

The 29-member group, led by former Oakland County Judge Barry Howard and former State Bar President Edward Pappas, will give its report to elected officials and the state Supreme Court, which has the power to implement some changes within Michigan's court system.

The task force recommends eliminating judgeships when a judge retires or dies, depending on the caseload in that court. The Michigan Supreme Court has long proposed dropping some jobs but lawmakers have refused to go along.

The group recommends a statewide case-management system for all county courts accessible by computer, much like the one used in federal court. It also wants a special docket just to handle business lawsuits in the state's two largest counties, Wayne and Oakland.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Robert Young Jr., who serves as head of the Michigan judiciary, said the report deserves serious consideration.

"As the report notes, some of our state courts simply have more judges than they need to keep up with their workload," Young said in a written statement. "Many of our courts could benefit from consolidating some functions with other courts in the same judicial circuit."

Some changes, such as a business court, could be ordered by the state Supreme Court. Others, however, would require approval by the state Legislature and the governor.

The group said criminal defense for the poor is getting worse and should be replaced by a statewide system. Court-appointed lawyers now are handled by each county with various levels of compensation and expertise. There is a pending lawsuit that seeks to force changes.

The task force also found that Michigan has 118 different legislative bodies — from city councils to the Michigan Legislature — making financial decisions that affect courts. Data is stored on 150 different computer servers.

The group recommends that another group of judges should be created to oversee the implementation of changes in the report.

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FROM TODAY'S PAPER

Caskets, body rescued from burning funeral home

Residents and firefighters have removed caskets, a body and cremated remains from a burning funeral home in mid-Michigan.

[Continued ...](#)

Jan 27, 2011 1:40 pm

Domestic-partner benefits OKed

The Michigan Civil Service Commission voted Wednesday to extend state-paid health insurance coverage to same-sex partners or other adults living with some state employees, despite objections raised by Gov. Rick Snyder's administration over the measure's potential costs.

[Continued ...](#)

Jan 27, 2011 7:32 am

Local governments seek budget options

Cash-strapped local governments in Michigan need more options to raise and save money as they try to balance their budgets, an organization representing cities, villages and townships across the state said Wednesday.

[Continued ...](#)

Jan 27, 2011 7:32 am

Deer hunters down last year in state

Deer hunting is a \$1 billion-a-year industry in Michigan, but last fall the bucks fell short. That's because the number of hunters and the amount of money they spent were down, experts said.

[Continued ...](#)

Jan 27, 2011 7:32 am

Gun used in police shooting traced

Federal authorities tracing the ownership chain of a 20-gauge shotgun used in a shootout at a Detroit police precinct have charged a former convict with illegally possessing it.



[Continued ...](#)

Jan 27, 2011 7:32 am 1 Photo

Nevada may join Mich. in ending fair

Nevada soon could join Michigan as the only states in the nation without a state fair. Organizers of Nevada's 136-year-old fair say its ongoing financial troubles worsened with slumping attendance last August and it likely won't be able to continue this summer without some help.

[Continued ...](#)

Jan 27, 2011 7:32 am

January 26, 2011

Proposal: End gun-free zones

A Michigan lawmaker introduced a proposal Tuesday that would lift restrictions on where residents with the proper licenses could carry concealed weapons.

[Continued ...](#)

Jan 26, 2011 7:27 am

Michigan in Brief: 01/26/2011

Police shooter was under investigation;

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THE LATEST FROM OUR BLOGS

Cherry industry awards

You know these people. The Kings. That's Betsy in pink, She Who Gives Pie. John's next to her. Rose is in green. You remember her from the apricot canning workshop, right? And over on the left is Jim, her husband and co-Grandparent of a First Grandchild. He's on the Torch Lake Township Planning Commission, too, but we won't hold that against him.



By Gerry Sell

Becoming an astrophotographer, Pt. XI



By Ed Hahnberg

My propensity for quick results from high-end cameras got me in trouble. The more I used the SBIG STL-11000CM, the more I realized I was back to square one — I did not like spending the time it took to utilize the extraordinary capabilities of the camera.

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Gunshot victims found at house fire; Police say they killed armed man

[Continued ...](#)

Jan 26, 2011 7:27 am

Mich. reaction to State of the Union

Michigan politicians react to President Obama's State of Union address:

[Continued ...](#)

Jan 26, 2011 6:12 am

January 25, 2011

Lawmaker wants to allow guns in more places

A Michigan lawmaker wants to lift the restrictions on where residents with the proper licenses can carry concealed weapons.

[Continued ...](#)

Jan 25, 2011 1:20 pm

Civil Rights Commission plans forums on bullying

The Michigan Civil Rights Commission is holding a public forum on bullying this month in Detroit.

[Continued ...](#)

Jan 25, 2011 10:06 am

Friends wonder why man shot police

After being arrested on drug charges nearly a decade ago, Lamar Moore told authorities he made a mistake and asked for a second chance. He got what he asked for. Until Sunday, when he strode into a Detroit police station with a shotgun and began firing at officers, wounding four before he was shot and killed.

[Continued ...](#)

Jan 25, 2011 6:41 am

Dow Chemical, conservancy to cooperate

Dow Chemical Co. pledged Monday to make environmental protection a primary consideration in all its business decisions and to operate its plants in more nature-friendly ways in partnership with a leading conservation group.

[Continued ...](#)

Jan 25, 2011 6:41 am

Ex-con arraigned in 5 Detroit rapes

A 31-year-old man who has spent much of his life in prison was charged Monday with kidnapping and raping five women in Detroit in a series of sexual assaults that began on New Year's Day.


[Continued ...](#)

Jan 25, 2011 6:41 am

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