

# WOMEN IN THE LAW

## A Growing Field

The Lansing Law Firm of Loomis, Ewert, Parsley, Davis and Gotting, P.C., which celebrated its 60th Anniversary last year, is currently comprised of eight talented female attorneys with varied and busy practices, including areas of law traditionally dominated by men.



**Catherine A. Jacobs** was the Loomis' first female shareholder in 1988, setting the path for several others to follow. Jacobs received her law degree from the University of Michigan and joined Loomis Law in 1981. She concentrates in the areas of probate, estate planning and elderly law, family law, adoption, transportation and mediation. She is among the 2014 Best Lawyers for her work in the practice of probate and estate planning and has been selected as one of the top ten lawyers in Michigan by the National Association of Family Law Attorneys.

"More women are choosing to go to law school than when I attended," said Jacobs. "I believe female lawyers are selecting to practice in whatever field they choose, making the industry diverse. This is clearly reflected in the Loomis Firm." Jacobs is a court-approved mediator in both civil litigation and family law. She has been active with the State Bar of Michigan through her tenure with the Probate and Estate Planning Council, the Professional Ethics Committee and the Alternative Dispute Resolution Council. Jacobs is a member of the board of directors of the YMCA of Lansing, Habitat for Humanity and a member of the ZONTA Club of East Lansing.



**Sara Cunningham** concentrates her practice in the areas of litigation, construction law, employment law and oil and gas. She balances a busy law practice while raising two small children. As a resident of East Lansing, Cunningham is active in the community as a member of Athena WIN, MAPL, MOGA, AAPL, and NAWIC. After graduating from MSU, she earned her law degree from Ohio State University College of Law and has practiced for several years at Loomis. She is a shareholder at the firm, and currently serves on the Firm's Executive Committee. Cunningham is licensed in both Michigan and Ohio, and was listed in Super Lawyers as a Rising Star for 2013.



**Tracey Lackman** concentrates in real-estate transactions involving low-income housing tax credits, new markets tax credits, and historic rehabilitation tax credits. Her practice also includes commercial real estate, corporate, and environmental law. In connection therewith, Lackman's practice includes the representation of a wide spectrum of clients, including developers (for profit and

nonprofit), tax-credit investors, and lenders. Lackman currently serves the legal community as the chair of the Real-Estate Section of the Ingham County Bar Association and a district member of the Character and Fitness Committee of the State Bar of Michigan. She joined Loomis Law Firm in 2001 as a law clerk before becoming an associate attorney in 2003 and a shareholder in 2011.

"My practice area is rewarding in so many different ways, but primarily, being a part of transactions that involve the remediation and redevelopment of contaminated and/or blighted sites, the preservation of historic structures, and/or the provision of safe, affordable housing to those in need is what helps to keep me inspired and motivated. I am very fortunate to be in a position where I can see my work come to 'life.'"



**Mieke Weissert** concentrates her practice in the areas of family law, estate planning, probate litigation and social security disability.

"I enjoy helping people and advocating their positions," said Weissert. "I live by my father's advice that he has given to me since I was a child, 'to always do your best', both in my professional and personal life."

Weissert regularly attends both the Institute of Continuing Legal Education's (ICLE) Family Law Institute and the Probate and Estate Planning Institute and holds ICLE certificates in these areas of the law. Weissert has extensive trial experience in District Court, Circuit Court and has also handled cases at the Michigan Court of Appeals and Michigan Supreme Court.



**Leah Brooks** is an associate who practices primarily in telecommunications and public utility law, and oil and gas law. Brooks earned her law degree from Cooley Law School.

"Having an education was very important to my grandmother, who was a Professor at Eastern Michigan University during the 60's and 70's when women didn't typically hold positions in higher education environments like universities," said Brooks. "That importance was instilled in my father, who then passed it on to me. I decided when I was about 12 years old that I wanted to be an attorney, because the legal profession is one of the most highly-educated professions." Prior to joining Loomis, Brooks worked for Field Law Group, PLLC. Brooks is an active member of the community, currently serving as a member of the Ingham County Bar Association-Young Lawyers Section Board of Directors and as a member of the Onondaga Township Planning Commission. Brooks is also a member of the Michigan Association of Professional Landmen and the American



**Elizabeth Husa Briggs** practices primarily in affordable housing and real estate law. A graduate of the University of Michigan Law School, she began her legal career working as a law clerk for former Justice Kenneth Bell on the Florida Supreme Court before transitioning to private practice as a corporate litigation associate at an international law firm in New York City.

Briggs returned to her home state of Michigan in 2009, serving first as a law clerk to the Honorable Judge Paul Sullivan on the 17th Circuit Court in Kent County. She joined Loomis as an associate in 2012.

The "Of Counsel" team at Loomis Law Firm is comprised of five attorneys, including



**Kelly Reed Lucas** and **Paula Manis**. Lucas is a graduate of the University of California, Hastings College of the Law. After graduating in 1987, she returned to her hometown, Lansing, Mich., to begin her legal career.

She recalls once interviewing for an associate attorney position with a large law firm and being puzzled by the interviewer's focus on the spelling of her first name. When asked, 'why do you use the male-form of your first name rather than something more effeminate like 'Kelli', she then realized the interviewer was seeking a male to fill the position. Never wishing to be thought of as a "woman" attorney, Lucas has long been involved in the male-dominated oil and gas industry. She also has an active probate and estate planning practice and is a court-approved mediator.



**Paula Manis** started her work life waitressing, bartending and hostessing at Emil's Restaurant on Michigan Avenue. She started there as a college freshman and continued working there through law school and the first couple of years in private practice to make ends meet. She maintained a solo practice during the day and worked at Emil's in the evening.

Manis was told in the beginning that oil and gas companies would not retain a woman and later was told that a woman would never be accepted as a mediator. She proved them wrong. Manis has represented oil and gas companies in exploration and production matters for over thirty years and has mediated hundreds of diverse civil matters throughout the state over the past twelve years.



### Loomis Ladies

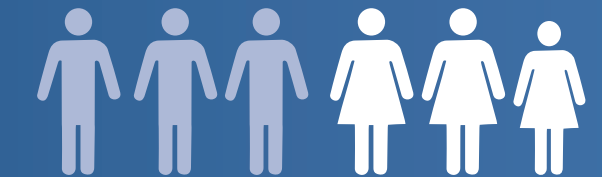
Left to right: Mieke Weissert, Leah Brooks, Elizabeth Briggs, Tracey Lackman, Kelly Reed Lucas, Catherine Jacobs, Sara Cunningham, Not Pictured: Paula Manis

## CLOSING THE GAP

A quick look at women who work in the law

According to the ABA:

Nearly half the law school population in the United States is female.



According to the center for Research on Gender in the Professions:

Women have earned 40% or more of all law degrees for the past 24 years.

In law firms, women account for 45% of associates and 55% of staff attorneys.

