

# MICHIGAN'S LAWYER-LEGISLATORS of the 98th State Legislature

## REP. PETER LUCIDO SEEKS SOLUTIONS FOR FAMILIES

By *Samantha Meinke*

**P**eter Lucido loves his family more than anything else.

He carries them in his heart everywhere he goes and uses the knowledge they've taught him to make every decision.

Lucido's grandparents immigrated to Michigan from Italy. They often told him about how they had to pass a civics test as part of the naturalization process. It's why one of the first things Lucido did upon arriving in Lansing was introduce a bill to require all Michigan students to pass a civics test before graduating from high school.

this is a government of the people and by the people, the people have got to learn about the government."

Lucido grew up in a huge family with three brothers and four sisters in Macomb County, where he still lives with his wife, Ann Marie. They raised three children there.

"We used to sit around a table and we talked about life," he says. "We didn't get interrupted by cell phones. We didn't get interrupted by other distractions of the day. That was all in the background when we were with family."



Courtesy photo

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He's hoping to use his business expertise to help turn Michigan's economy around, so that someday maybe his kids can pursue opportunities back home.

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"My grandfather realized after learning his rights and responsibilities as a citizen of this country that it is the best country in the world, and he made sure we understood that as his grandchildren," Lucido said. "If

But now that his children are grown, they, like so many other young Michiganders, have left the state to pursue opportunities elsewhere. Each of them lives in a different state.

And that's why Lucido came to Lansing.

"Everyone I've encountered in my journey to become a legislator has a son or a daughter or a grandson or granddaughter who has left the state," he said, his eyes filling with sadness. "How do I support my kids if they're leaving the state?"

He's hoping to use his business expertise to help turn Michigan's economy around, so that someday maybe his kids can pursue opportunities back home.

Lucido has always been interested in becoming a lawyer, in part because his grandmother told him that's what he was destined to become because he talked so much.

## Peter Lucido

First elected in November 2014; represents the 36th District, encompassing part of Macomb County including Bruce and Washington townships, part of Shelby Township, and the village of Romeo

Age: 55

**Legal life:** Founder, president, and managing partner of Lucido & Manzella, one of Macomb County's largest law firms

**Business life:** Founded *Macomb Now Magazine* and serves as publisher emeritus; also a licensed insurance agent, realtor, and security register representative

**Education:** Macomb Community College associate's degree; Oakland University bachelor's degree in public administration and business; Central Michigan University master's degree in business administration; and Detroit College of Law juris doctor

**Hobby:** Golf

"She planted a seed only I knew would grow," Lucido said. "I decided when I was very young that someday those people who can't talk or fight for themselves—that I will do that for them."

So he made himself into the most formidable advocate possible, earning a bachelor's degree in public administration and business from Oakland University, a master's degree in business administration from Central Michigan University, and a juris doctor from Detroit College of Law.

He founded and ran Lucido & Manzella, a highly successful Macomb County

law firm. While doing so, Lucido saw a growing disconnect in the courtroom. On the one hand, he saw his clients, who came to seek justice by having their day in court. On the other hand, he saw judges struggling to keep up with ever-expanding dockets, trying to move cases through quickly and efficiently.

"I became frustrated with the process in the courtroom," he said. "I've told my children that if you don't like things in life, change them."

He's hoping to help improve the legal system in Michigan by sharing his practical

courtroom experience to reform dysfunctional statutes and laws. In particular, he'd like to see an end to age limits for judges.

"My dad is 92 and he's still sharp as a tack," Lucido said. "If you lose a great judge at 70 and replace him with a lawyer five years out of law school, that makes no sense.... There was recently a certain practitioner who had spent 20 years as a judge, and he had to leave the bench—why do we want that experience and that dedication gone? If a judge is doing the right thing and a good job, it should be the people's decision to keep them."

Lucido also worries about unfunded pensions and healthcare liabilities, crumbling infrastructure, and municipalities that need emergency managers.

He focuses on finding solutions to those problems to create a better Michigan and a stronger Macomb County, where he hopes someday his family can once again routinely gather around the dinner table and talk about life. ■

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## REP. ROB VERHEULEN'S FASCINATING PATH TO THE STATE LEGISLATURE

By Mike Eidelbes

Leave it to an attorney to compare the state legislature's deal last year to rescue the city of Detroit from its financial straits to a slip-and-fall case. That's the parallel drawn by Rep. Robert VerHeulen, a Republican from the 74th District covering northern and western Kent County.

You know what? It works.

"It's the same decision-making process," the Grand Rapids native said. "It was helpful for our caucus to hear from the mediator, 'This isn't a slam dunk. You could lose.'

"at every word in a statute, flyspecking it"—clash with his legislative workload.

"It's my nature to want to understand it myself so when I cast that vote, I can defend it," he explained. "It's not just reading the bill; it's understanding it and putting it in context.... You've got to strike a balance."

After graduating from the University of Michigan and enrolling in Wayne State University Law School, VerHeulen initially envisioned himself in a different line of public service.

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You need experts to tell you what that outside exposure is and who has a realistic assessment of the liability or the potential liability."

VerHeulen, in his second term as a state representative after serving as mayor of Walker for 11 years, calls the Detroit bailout the most important piece of legislation he's supported to date. He and his fellow lawyers in the GOP caucus played a crucial role in its passage; the mediator for the "grand bargain" met with them to explain the intricacies of the measure, then asked them to break it down for other Republican lawmakers.

It's one example of the advantages an attorney enjoys in the legislative process. There are times, however, when VerHeulen's instincts—as a lawyer, he liked to look

"I was thinking of applying to the FBI, but then I got married and we had a little one," he said. "My experience in law school was that, 'I don't think I'm a law enforcement kind of guy.'"

After law school, he moved into private practice in Grand Rapids for a few years. Then, he noticed an ad in a newspaper—retail giant Meijer was adding to its legal department.

"It kind of fascinated me to have one client," VerHeulen recalled. "I said, 'I'm young enough. If it doesn't work out, I can go back to private practice.'"

It worked out. Much of VerHeulen's duties during his 30 years with the company focused on the Meijer Foundation and the family's needs—"I was with the company, but my primary mission was to take care of



Courtesy photo

the family," he said. One unique aspect of his job was purchasing sculptures for Meijer Gardens on behalf of the Meijer Foundation.

"Because I was, as [company founder] Fred [Meijer] put it, frugal with his money, I would negotiate the transaction," said VerHeulen, who up until Fred Meijer's passing in 2011 was his personal attorney. "I had no recognition of [the artist's] stature. To me, it was just like negotiating for a sack of potatoes.

"I went to London, I went to Italy a few times. Young lawyers would say, 'How do you get a gig like that?' I'd say, 'You're at the right place at the right time. Sometimes doors just open.'"

The door to the state legislature opened for VerHeulen in 2012, two years after it looked like it had closed for good with a GOP primary loss to 86th District incumbent Lisa Posthumus Lyons.

"I thought, I'm going to just stay at the local level, forgetting that every 10 years we redraw the [legislative district] lines," VerHeulen said. "So they redrew the lines and *voila!* Here I am."

During his first term in Lansing, VerHeulen's goal was weighing in on policy matters which, upon the advice of a former co-worker—ex-state treasurer and current Meijer President Mark Murray—led him

## Rob VerHeulen

First elected in November 2012; represents the 74th District, encompassing the cities of Walker, Grandville, Rockford, and Cedar Springs as well as Solon, Tyrone, Sparta, Algoma, and Alpine townships

Age: 61

**Legal life:** Most recently, spent 30 years as an attorney for Meijer, Inc.; among his roles was serving as general counsel for the Meijer Foundation and personal attorney for company founder Fred Meijer. Previously, he worked for a law firm and owned his own firm.

**Education:** Grand Rapids Community College, University of Michigan, and Wayne State University Law School

**Hobbies:** Fishing and riding his Harley

“The merger is going to take a lot of my time and attention over the next year or so,” VerHeulen said. “Two departments which serve, in a lot of ways, the same client group—why should [people] have to deal with two different departments? My hope is [the merger] is going to enhance services and...I hope it can be done at a lower cost.”

He enjoyed a long and interesting legal career, but VerHeulen cherishes his current role as a state lawmaker and doesn't envision giving up public service anytime soon.

“I like to think I'll work until my mind goes or my body goes,” he said. “I am the voice—the advocate, if you will—for 90,000 people. And really, our obligation is to the state, so it's really 10 million people. That's pretty unique.” ■

to take a spot on the House Appropriations Committee.

“Mark said, ‘You don't think appropriations has an impact on policy?’” VerHeulen recalled. “He was right. Appropriations is not just numbers. It's looking at policy and looking at people.”

VerHeulen has more responsibilities this term. He serves on the House Health Policy Committee and chairs the Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Community Health, a department with a \$19 billion budget now merging with the Department of Human Services.

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