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Briefly Speaking

Press conference focuses attention on criminal defense system

The importance of an effective system for criminal defense and calls for improvement in Michigan's current system were highlighted at a press conference Friday, September 15, in Ypsilanti.

Three recent State Bar presidents, the current president, two members of the Public Defense Task Force, as well as a man wrongfully imprisoned for a crime that he did not commit and later exonerated by DNA testing, all spoke about the need to ensure that the justice system works fairly and effectively.

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Issues of concern within the criminal justice community include funding disparities, caseloads, compensation, training, standards and oversight. A statewide study of the Michigan system conducted by the National Legal Aid and Defender Association under the auspices of the State Bar and in cooperation of the State Court Administrative Office, is currently underway. The study is expected to

be completed early next year.

The press conference was held in conjunction with a program organized by the Criminal Law Section of the State Bar of Michigan at the bar's annual meeting.

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