

Biography of Justice Richard Bernstein

Justice Richard Bernstein was elected to the Michigan Supreme Court in 2014 and became the first blind justice. He is an attorney, an educator, and a former Wayne State University Board of Governors Chair. Prior to being elected, Justice Bernstein headed the public service division for The Sam Bernstein Law Firm. Blind since birth, he is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Michigan and earned his juris doctor from Northwestern University School of Law.

Over the course of his career, Justice Bernstein's cases often set national standards. Among his cases, he successfully partnered with the United States Department of Justice to force the City of Detroit to fix broken wheelchair lifts on its buses, establishing a precedent for accessibility in public transportation. Justice Bernstein also represented residents with disabilities in Michigan which impacted future Americans with Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) compliance for road construction throughout the United States. Further, he won a landmark settlement against Delta Airlines and Detroit Metro Airport. A proponent of education, Justice Bernstein argued for, and won, preservation of special education funding and filed a federal suit against the American Bar Association which put an end to its discriminatory practices toward blind students.

Honors Justice Bernstein has received include: "Michiganiaan of the Year", one of Crain's Detroit Business' "40 Under 40" and recognition on worldwide television by CNN as a leader in keeping government honest. He is the recipient of the 2008 John W. Cumiskey Pro Bono Award. Michigan Lawyers Weekly named him a 2009 Leader in the Law, and the University of Michigan presented him with the James T. Neubacher Award in 2011 for his unwavering commitment to equal rights. In 2013, Justice Bernstein was inducted into the National Jewish Sports Hall of Fame. In his spare time, Justice Bernstein is an avid runner, completed 25 marathons and the full Ironman triathlon. Justice Bernstein delivered a Ted Talk, presented at the United Nations, and has been featured regularly as a local and global speaker.