

# **Racial Equity Assessment**

**For Kalamazoo County General Election  
Released October 2022**



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# About Group

The Equity Collective created this document and our goal is to bring more transparency and awareness about candidates on the ballot for the upcoming elections in Kalamazoo County.

The Equity Collective has a focus on racial equity and we aim to educate voters on where the incumbents and new candidates stand on racial equity.

The understanding of how systems of oppression affect marginalized communities and communities as a whole is essential for an elected official to effectively serve their constituents.

This is why the Equity Collective conducted an in-depth review on Kalamazoo County candidates running in the 2022 general election, so that we may inform voters on which candidates have a racial equity lens.

# Assessment Overview

This Racial Equity Assessment will begin with a reminder section of the top of the ticket races: the Governor and Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Attorney General, Representatives in Congress, State Senators and State Representatives, for Kalamazoo County. In this section readers will be able to find the candidates' websites along with a link to [vote411.org](http://vote411.org) and [ballotpedia.com](http://ballotpedia.com) to find their voting location and see what their ballot will look like.

Next this assessment will review Kalamazoo County Judicial candidates, Kalamazoo County Commissioner candidates and incumbents running for office. For judges this assessment will reference the Judge Charles A. Pratt Bar Association racial equity assessment\* (a non partisan organization). There will also be links to candidates' websites and to a Judicial Candidates Forum, where candidates were asked questions regarding racial equity (the video is approximately 2 hours long). The assessment ranking created by the bar association is as follows:

- **Needs Development:** Candidate has minimal or no awareness of diversity, equity and inclusion principles that are necessary to have a fair and balanced judicial temperament. Although candidate may have demonstrated competent skills as an attorney, candidate does not appear to have the skill, experience or temperament to perform the essential functions of being a judge.
- **Qualified:** Candidate demonstrates traits that illustrate a fair and balanced temperament, has an awareness of diversity, equity and inclusion principles and is competent to perform the essential functions of being a judge.
- **Very Qualified:** Candidate demonstrates traits that illustrate a strong judicial temperament, and some analysis of diversity, equity and inclusion principles. Candidate also has the ability to put into practice their diversity, equity and inclusion analysis and possesses skills to perform the essential functions of being a judge.
- **Exceptionally Qualified:** Candidate demonstrates exceptional traits that illustrate a strong judicial temperament, and has deep analysis of diversity, equity and inclusion principles. Candidate also has a track record of putting into action their diversity, equity and inclusion principles. Candidate has demonstrated experience and possesses skills to perform the essential functions of being a judge.

The Kalamazoo County Commission incumbents will be assessed on their previous voting records on the categories of Housing, Public Safety & Public Health, and Public Support. For all candidates who are running for County Commission, their websites, social media, and forum responses have been provided for review.

\* The Judge Charles A. Pratt Bar Association racial equity assessment may not reflect the views of all the organizations supporting this assessment.

# Top of the Ticket Races

These candidates will not be assessed on this document. This assessment will focus on lower level local races in Kalamazoo. However, please review the candidates websites and voting resources below to learn more about these races and your upcoming ballot. Please go to [vote411.org](http://vote411.org) and [ballotpedia.com](http://ballotpedia.com) and type in your address to view the candidate information and your ballot. Please also check your voter registration.

## Governor & Lt. Governor

(On your ballot you will vote for no more than 1 candidate)

Name	Candidate Website
Gretchen Whitmer Garlin D. Gilchrist II	<a href="https://gretchenwhitmer.com/">https://gretchenwhitmer.com/</a>
Tudor M. Dixon Shane Hernandez Shane Hernandez	<a href="https://www.tudordixon.com/">https://www.tudordixon.com/</a>
Mary Buzuma Brian Ellison	<a href="https://electmarybuzuma.com/">https://electmarybuzuma.com/</a>
Donna Brandenburg Melissa Carone	<a href="https://brandenburgforgovernor.com/">https://brandenburgforgovernor.com/</a>
Kevin Hogan Destiny Clayton	No official candidate website available (review ballotpedia for candidate information)
Daryl M. Simpson Doug Dern	No official candidate website available (review ballotpedia for candidate information)

## Secretary of State

(On your ballot you will vote for no more than 1 candidate)

Name	Candidate Website
<b>Jocelyn Benson</b>	<a href="https://votebenson.com/">https://votebenson.com/</a>
<b>Kristina Elaine Karamo</b>	<a href="https://kristinakaramo.com/">https://kristinakaramo.com/</a>
<b>Gregory Scott Stempfle</b>	No official candidate website available (review ballotpedia for candidate information)
<b>Christine C. Schwartz</b>	No official candidate website available (review ballotpedia for candidate information)
<b>Destiny Clayton</b>	No official candidate website available (review ballotpedia for candidate information)

## Attorney General

(On your ballot you will vote for no more than 1 candidate)

Name	Candidate Website
<b>Dana Nessel</b>	<a href="https://www.dananessel.com/">https://www.dananessel.com/</a>
<b>Matthew DePerno</b>	<a href="https://www.depernoformi.com/about">https://www.depernoformi.com/about</a>
<b>Joseph W. McHugh Jr.</b>	No official candidate website available (review ballotpedia for candidate information)
<b>Gerald T. Van Sickle</b>	No official candidate website available (review ballotpedia for candidate information)

## Congressional House Representative 4th District

(On your ballot you will vote for no more than 1 candidate)

Name	Candidate Website
Joseph Alfonso	<a href="https://www.josephalfonsoforcongress.com/policy">https://www.josephalfonsoforcongress.com/policy</a>
Bill Huizenga	<a href="https://huizengaforcongress.com/">https://huizengaforcongress.com/</a>
Lorence Wenke	No official candidate website available (review ballotpedia for candidate information)
Curtis Michael Clark	No official candidate website available (review ballotpedia for candidate information)

## State Senator 19th District

(On your ballot you will vote for no more than 1 candidate)

Name	Candidate Website
Sean McCann	<a href="https://seanamccann.com/">https://seanamccann.com/</a>
Tamara Mitchell	<a href="https://drmitchellforsenate.com/">https://drmitchellforsenate.com/</a>

## State Senator 18th District

(On your ballot you will vote for no more than 1 candidate)

Name	Candidate Website
Kai W Degraaf	<a href="http://kaiforsenate.com/index.html">http://kaiforsenate.com/index.html</a>
Thoman A. Albert	<a href="http://www.votealbert.com/about">http://www.votealbert.com/about</a>

## State Representative 40th District

(On your ballot you will vote for no more than 1 candidate)

Name	Candidate Website
Christine Morse	<a href="https://vote4morse.com/">https://vote4morse.com/</a>
Kelly Sackett	<a href="https://vote4sackett.com/">https://vote4sackett.com/</a>

## State Representative 41st District

(On your ballot you will vote for no more than 1 candidate)

Name	Candidate Website
Julie M. Rogers	<a href="https://www.juliemrogers.com/">https://www.juliemrogers.com/</a>
Terry Haines	<a href="https://www.cterryhaines.com/">https://www.cterryhaines.com/</a>
Rafael Wolf	No official candidate website available (review ballotpedia for candidate information)

## State Representative 42nd District

(On your ballot you will vote for no more than 1 candidate)

Name	Candidate Website
Justin Mendoza	<a href="https://www.justin4mi.com/issueshd42">https://www.justin4mi.com/issueshd42</a>
Matt Hall	<a href="http://www.electmatthall.com/">http://www.electmatthall.com/</a>

## State Representative 45th District

(On your ballot you will vote for no more than 1 candidate)

Name	Candidate Website
Ron Hawkins	<a href="https://ronfor45.com/">https://ronfor45.com/</a>
Sarah Lighter	<a href="https://electsarahlighner.com/">https://electsarahlighner.com/</a>

## NONPARTISAN SECTION

### Supreme Court

(On your ballot you will vote for no more than 2 candidates)

Name	Candidate Website
Kyra Harris Bolden	<a href="https://boldenforjustice.com/">https://boldenforjustice.com/</a>
Richard Bernstein	<a href="https://bernsteinandbolden.com/justice-richard-bernstein/">https://bernsteinandbolden.com/justice-richard-bernstein/</a>
Paul Hudson	<a href="https://hudsonforjustice.com/">https://hudsonforjustice.com/</a>
Kerry Lee Morgan	No official candidate website available (review ballotpedia for candidate information)
Brian Zahra	<a href="https://www.zahra4justice.com/">https://www.zahra4justice.com/</a>

# Judicial Racial Equity Assessment

## [Kalamazoo County Judges Racial Equity Forum](#)

This link is to view the Judicial Candidate Forum of Kalamazoo County Judicial Candidates for the 9th Circuit Court and 8th District Court Judge seats. This forum was filmed during the 2022 Primary Election, meaning some candidates in the forum are no longer on the ballot.

## [Kalamazoo County Judicial Candidates – Anti-Racism and Equity Responses](#)

This link is to view the questionnaire candidates responded to about racial equity before the primary election.

# Judicial Candidate Racial Equity Scoring

(Original document being referenced: [Judge Charles A. Pratt Bar Association Racial Judicial Equity Assessment](#)).

Each candidate has been assigned a ranking by the Judge Charles A. Pratt Bar Association and the ranking is as follows:

- **Needs Development:** Candidate has minimal or no awareness of diversity, equity and inclusion principles that are necessary to have a fair and balanced judicial temperament. Although candidate may have demonstrated competent skills as an attorney, candidate does not appear to have the skill, experience or temperament to perform the essential functions of being a judge.
- **Qualified:** Candidate demonstrates traits that illustrate a fair and balanced temperament, has an awareness of diversity, equity and inclusion principles and is competent to perform the essential functions of being a judge.
- **Very Qualified:** Candidate demonstrates traits that illustrate a strong judicial temperament, and some analysis of diversity, equity and inclusion principles. Candidate also has the ability to put into practice their diversity, equity and inclusion analysis and possesses skills to perform the essential functions of being a judge.
- **Exceptionally Qualified:** Candidate demonstrates exceptional traits that illustrate a strong judicial temperament, and has deep analysis of diversity, equity and inclusion principles. Candidate also has a track record of putting into action their diversity, equity and inclusion principles. Candidate has demonstrated experience and possesses skills to perform the essential functions of being a judge.

**8th District Court Judge Position**

(On your ballot you will vote for no more than 1 candidate)

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Pratt Bar Association Ranking</b>
<b>Lana Mara Escamilla</b>	<b>Very Qualified</b>
<b>Becket Jones</b>	<b>Exceptionally Qualified</b>

**9th Circuit Court Judge Position**

(On your ballot you will vote for no more than 2 candidate)

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Pratt Bar Association Ranking</b>
<b>Ken Barnard</b>	<b>Qualified</b>
<b>Rebecca D'Angelo</b>	<b>Needs Development</b>
<b>Josh Hilgart</b>	<b>Very Qualified</b>
<b>Julie Jensen</b>	<b>Very Qualified</b>

# Candidate Websites

## 8th District Court Judge Position

Candidate	Candidate Websites
Lana Mara Escamilla	<a href="https://votelanaescamilla.com/">https://votelanaescamilla.com/</a>
Becket Jones	<a href="https://www.becketforthebench.com/">https://www.becketforthebench.com/</a>

## 9th Circuit Court Judge Position

Candidate	Candidate Websites
Ken Barnard	<a href="https://www.barnard4judge.com/">https://www.barnard4judge.com/</a>
Rebecca D'Angelo	<a href="https://judgeforkalamazoo.com/">https://judgeforkalamazoo.com/</a>
Josh Hilgart	<a href="https://www.hilgart4judge.com/">https://www.hilgart4judge.com/</a>
Julie Jensen	<a href="https://www.juliejensen4judge.com/">https://www.juliejensen4judge.com/</a>

# Incumbent Voting History

## Housing

### Approval of \$3 Million for Affordable Housing

District Number	County Commissioner	Yes/No Vote
District 1	Tami Rey	Yes
District 2	Jen Strebs	Yes
District 3	Monteze Morales	Yes
District 6	John H. Gisler	Yes
District 7	Jeff Heppler	Absent for vote

### Vote on Appointing Qualified People of Color to the Public Housing Commission

District Number	County Commissioner	Yes/No Vote
District 1	Tami Rey	Yes
District 2	Jen Strebs	Yes
District 3	Monteze Morales	Yes
District 6	John H. Gisler	No
District 7	Jeff Heppler	No

\*This district number is based on the current district where the candidate is running

# Public Safety & Public Health

## Vote to End Emergency Order for Control and Prevention of COVID-19 Transmission in Educational Settings within Kalamazoo County

District Number	County Commissioner	Yes/No Vote
District 1	Tami Rey	No
District 2	Jen Strebs	No
District 3	Monteze Morales	No
District 6	John H. Gisler	Absent for vote
District 7	Jeff Heppler	Yes

## Vote to Support All Emergency Orders by Kalamazoo County Health Officer

District Number	County Commissioner	Yes/No Vote
District 1	Tami Rey	Yes
District 2	Jen Strebs	Yes
District 3	Monteze Morales	Yes
District 6	John H. Gisler	No
District 7	Jeff Heppler	No

## Resolution to Support Public Database of Arrest Datas

District Number	County Commissioner	Yes/No Vote
District 1	Tami Rey	Yes
District 2	Jen Strebs	Yes
District 3	Monteze Morales	Yes
District 6	John H. Gisler	No
District 7	Jeff Heppler	No

**Vote on Resolution Declaring Gun Violence as a Public Health Crisis**

<b>District Number</b>	<b>County Commissioner</b>	<b>Yes/No Vote</b>
District 1	Tami Rey	Yes
District 2	Jen Strebs	Yes
District 3	Monteze Morales	Yes
District 6	John H. Gisler	No
District 7	Jeff Heppler	No

**Vote to Oppose Gearing Towards Privatizing Michigan's Mental Health System**

<b>District Number</b>	<b>County Commissioner</b>	<b>Yes/No Vote</b>
District 1	Tami Rey	Yes
District 2	Jen Strebs	Yes
District 3	Monteze Morales	Not Yet Elected
District 6	John H. Gisler	Yes
District 7	Jeff Heppler	Yes

# Community Support

## Vote to Give \$1,000 to Aid Essential Workers

District Number	County Commissioner	Yes/No Vote
District 1	Tami Rey	Yes
District 2	Jen Strebs	Yes
District 3	Monteze Morales	Yes
District 6	John H. Gisler	No
District 7	Jeff Heppler	No

## Vote to Continue the Keeping the Lights on After School Program

District Number	County Commissioner	Yes/No Vote
District 1	Tami Rey	Yes
District 2	Jen Strebs	Yes
District 3	Monteze Morales	Yes
District 6	John H. Gisler	Yes
District 7	Jeff Heppler	Yes

## Vote for Creation of DEI Director Hiring Subcommittee

This vote aimed to create a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion committee for Kalamazoo County and hire a director to lead the committee

District Number	County Commissioner	Yes/No Vote
District 1	Tami Rey	Yes
District 2	Jen Strebs	Yes
District 3	Monteze Morales	Yes
District 6	John H. Gisler	Yes
District 7	Jeff Heppler	Yes

### Hiring County Administrator

District Number	County Commissioner	Yes/No Vote
District 1	Tami Rey	Yes
District 2	Jen Strebs	Yes
District 3	Monteze Morales	Yes
District 6	John H. Gisler	Yes
District 7	Jeff Heppler	No

### Vote to Declare Juneteenth (June 19th) as a County Holiday

District Number	County Commissioner	Yes/No Vote
District 1	Tami Rey	Yes
District 2	Jen Strebs	Yes
District 3	Monteze Morales	Yes
District 6	John H. Gisler	No
District 7	Jeff Heppler	No

# Review Your Commissioner's Online Presence

To understand your candidate's racial equity lens please review their online presence around community positions such as housing, economic development, and public safety. Here are their official candidate websites, social media, and online forums for your reference. **Please go to [vote411.org](http://vote411.org) and [ballotpedia.com](http://ballotpedia.com) and type in your address to view the candidate information and your ballot.** Please also check your voter registration.

## District 1

### **Tami Rey**

Official Candidate website: <http://electtamirey.com/>

Official Candidate Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/CommissionerTamiRey/>

## District 2

### **Jen Strebs**

Official Candidate website: <https://www.jenstrebs.com/about>

Official Candidate Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/jenstrebs>

## District 3

### **Monteze Morales**

Official Candidate Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/montezemoralesd3>

## District 4

### **Abigail Wheeler**

Official Candidate Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/abigailformichigan>

### **Charley Coss**

Official Candidate website: <https://votecoss.com/>

## District 5

### **John Patrick Taylor**

No current candidate website, online forum responses, candidate social media

### **Peter Strazdas**

No current candidate website, online forum responses, candidate social media

## District 6

### **John Gisler**

Online forum responses: <https://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/2022/07/republican-kalamazoo-county-commissioner-faces-challenger-in-district-6-primary-race.html>

### **Anthony M. Bates**

No current candidate website, online forum responses, candidate social media

## District 7

### **Jeff Heppler**

Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/people/Commissioner-Jeff-Heppler/100063602089810/>

### **Luke Howell**

Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100057982002946>

## District 8

### **Wendy Mazer**

Official Candidate website: <https://www.wendymazer.org/copy-of-meet-wendy>

Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100080441870741>

### **Stephanie Willoughby**

Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/vote4willo/>

## District 9

### **Dale Deleeuw**

Official Candidate website: <https://www.daledeleeuw.net/>

Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100082141471609>

### **Tom Graham**

Official Candidate website: <https://www.return2integrity.com/policy.html>

\*Please note that personal social media was not included for review of candidates running for office.

\* The Equity Collective is composed of community members and non-partisan organizations who are committed to anti-racist work in the community of Kalamazoo.

