

## LANSING

123 West Allegan St.  
Suite 200  
Lansing, Michigan 48933  
T: +1.517.483.4907  
O: +1.517.487.2070  
F: +1.517.374.6304

danhof@millercanfield.com

## Services

Public Finance  
Economic Development  
Housing

## Industries

Higher Education

## Education

University of Michigan Law School,  
J.D., 1974

Michigan State University, B.A.,  
1971

## Bar Admissions

Michigan

## Court Admissions

United States Supreme Court

## William J. Danhof

Of Counsel



Bill Danhof is a leader in the practice of public finance.

Bill joined Miller Canfield in 1974, just five days after graduating from the University of Michigan Law School. He has since then been instrumental in making the firm's Public Finance Group a premier provider of municipal and public finance legal services (the group is the largest in Michigan and one of the largest in the Midwest). Additionally, he established Miller Canfield's presence in Lansing when he agreed to open the firm's office near the Capitol in 1980, and has become the attorney that lawmakers call to accomplish the "undoable."

One such project is the Little Caesars Arena. Bill proposed a complex financing option using two types of bonds: \$250 million in Series A bonds that are backed by Downtown Development Authority property taxes, and \$200 million in Series B bonds that are backed by money that Olympia Development has agreed to pay.

In 1982, when the State of Michigan was facing dire budget issues, and the very real possibility of payless paydays for the state's employees, most of the banks in the world had determined they couldn't help Michigan get through the crisis. Bill represented a consortium of seven Japanese banks that provided a letter of credit to guarantee the state's short-term borrowing, enabling the state to avoid the crisis of not being able to pay its workers.

That same year, he served as bond counsel for the new \$237 million University of Michigan hospital, which at the time was the largest bond issue ever done by the state.

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### **Legislative Work**

Throughout his career, Bill has drafted legislation that has changed the way the state and its municipalities finance large capital projects. The most impactful was the Michigan Municipal Bond Authority Statute, Act 227 of 1985. The authority was created to assist in the selling of bonds by local governmental units in Michigan, and has provided an avenue for them to have market access, whether or not they're poor credit or good credit.

He pioneered State Appropriation Risk Lease Financing. At the time, people said it couldn't be done, and now it is the standard, and is the way that the State of Michigan, the Michigan House and Michigan Senate were able to finance a number of their office buildings.

In 2008, Bill drafted language for the Michigan New Jobs Training Program legislation, which during the height of the nationwide economic crisis enabled workers in pursuit of high-demand jobs to receive training at community colleges. The program allowed for the capture of state income tax payments from the new workers' paychecks to reimburse the community colleges for the cost of training, a win-win for all involved. The students received the essential training they needed to re-enter the workforce, and the colleges received payment from students who might not otherwise have been able to afford retraining. The program was capped at \$50 million, which was completely used in a period of two years, demonstrating the high demand for the one-of-a-kind program.

It was Bill who developed the legal framework for the Crossing Agreement between Michigan and Canada, enabling Canada and Michigan to move forward with the construction of the Gordie Howe Bridge without requiring new legislation and without any cost to the state of Michigan. The Crossing Agreement was also approved by the Department of State.

Most recently was the Municipal Lighting Authority Act, Act 392 of 2012, which enabled the City of Detroit to undertake a massive project to replace all of Detroit's streetlights at a time when the city was working through bankruptcy. The statute afforded the city a creative solution to keep the funds for the lighting project out of bankruptcy court. All the streetlights have been replaced.

Each of these projects required Bill to not only craft solutions that will work, but also to make sure those solutions could achieve consensus among diverse groups of stakeholders who often have competing motivations, and philosophical and political approaches. His greatest strength as a leader is the ability to get people to believe that what he suggests is not only possible, but is the reasonable approach.

### **Service on Commissions and Boards**

Bill's opinion is well respected and sought after in the legal community and among our state's leaders, and he works tirelessly to lend his expertise to solve some of the community's biggest challenges. For example, he was called upon to testify in the Governor's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Infrastructure Commission, which took a hard look at what the state needs to innovate and succeed in the future economy.

Additionally, he was involved in Gov. Rick Snyder's task force on developing a financial solution to save Detroit Public Schools.

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He has served on task forces to address fiscally troubled governmental unions, local pension reforms (a task force on which he was one of the few private citizens to serve), and he devised a legislative solution to raise \$140 million per year by implementing a clean water fee on the sale of water, which will fund local clean water projects.

He was appointed twice by Pres. George W. Bush to serve on the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council Board of Trustees, and served on its executive and audit committees and as chairman of the Audit Committee for seven years. He continued to serve through Pres. Barack Obama's term, until early in 2016. Having been appointed twice is extremely rare, and is a testament to the value he brings to the board, which has included a distinguished and diverse list of appointees, including the U.S. Attorney General, U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security, a Deputy National Security Advisor for Global Democracy Strategy, White House Chief of Staff and a Nobel Peace Prize winner. He continues to serve as a member of the audit committee.

He was in 2003-2004 elected as the president of the American College of Bond Counsel, a national organization with members in every state. The College was established to honor bond attorneys that have shown superior abilities, reputation, and skills and high standards of conduct. Bill was a founding member of the College.

He was appointed by the Michigan Supreme Court in 2005 to serve on the Attorney Discipline Board, which has oversight and responsibility for the attorney discipline system throughout the state. He remained on the board until 2011, and had served as Chairman for three years.

In 2017 Bill received a congressional appointment to serve on the Federal Judicial Selection Committee for federal judges in the Western District of Michigan.

### **Service in the Community**

Bill and his wife, Nancy, are deeply involved in children's issues. Quietly and without fanfare, the two of them make a positive difference in the lives of children, as they have for decades, much of which was the result of Nancy's role as the executive director of the Todd Martin Development Fund, which she led for 12 years. As a team, Bill and Nancy have helped children to achieve by personally paying for things that help them overcome barriers, such as SAT preparation classes, clothing and even things such as a new computer for a teenager. Bill also volunteers with numerous programs through his church to support young people and the greater Lansing community.