

Steven H. Hilfinger

Partner/Retired

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Detroit

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Steve Hilfinger served as a senior business counselor representing for-profit and nonprofit companies on mergers and acquisitions (M&A), finance transactions, corporate and board counseling, and government affairs matters. He represented automotive suppliers and other manufacturers for more than 30 years, helping found the firm's Detroit office and its Automotive Industry Team and Manufacturing Sector.

Steve was a member of the firm's Manufacturing Sector Advisory Board as well as co-chair of the Electrified Mobility & Infrastructure initiative and Smart Manufacturing initiative.

Steve formerly served as Chief Regulatory Officer for the State of Michigan and Chief Operating Officer of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

Representative Experience

Mergers and Acquisitions

- Closed more than 200 M&A transactions in a variety of industries, including automotive, manufacturing, business services, advanced technology, and other sectors.
- Represents private equity firms, private and publicly held corporations, closely held and family businesses, and family offices in a variety of M&A, joint venture, and other investment matters.
- Has extensive restructuring experience in "distressed M&A" and guided two debtors through Chapter 11 plan confirmation.

Finance

- Represents borrowers and lenders in a variety of corporate finance transactions.
- Began his career doing extensive work for a large global bank, a large complex of mezzanine loan funds, and a complex of venture capital funds, focusing on private transactions.

Corporate Counseling

- Serves as outside general counsel to several companies, including both for-profit and nonprofit concerns. This work includes counseling on business formation and corporate and board governance, general corporate and commercial contract counseling, and a variety of other legal and compliance matters.

Nonprofit

- Extensive experience in representing nonprofits, and counseling and service on nonprofit boards.
- Served as chief operating officer of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, a 501(c)(3) focused on economic development.
- Serves as secretary, treasury, and board member of NextEnergy Center, a 501(c)(3) focused on energy and mobility.
- Served on several Boards in his capacity as chief regulatory officer of the State of Michigan.
- Active with other nonprofits, including Invest Detroit (member of Investment Committee) and MichAuto (co-chair of Advocacy Committee), a statewide program of the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Government Affairs

- Assists with government and public affairs matters in Michigan as a registered lobbyist in Michigan and member of the firm's Government Solutions Team, which assists clients with a variety of administrative and legislative matters in Michigan including in Lansing and Detroit.
- Served as chief regulatory officer for the State of Michigan under Michigan Governor Rick Snyder. In that capacity, he served as director of the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) and its Office of Regulatory Reinvention (ORR). He later served as chief operating officer of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) under Governor Snyder.

Automotive

- Co-founded Foley's Automotive Industry Team, focused on representing automotive suppliers and technology companies with their full range of legal needs. In that role, he has handled mergers and acquisitions, finance, and other corporate mandates for numerous automotive suppliers.
- Served as legal counsel to a number of strategy councils of the Motor Equipment Manufacturers Associate / Original Equipment Suppliers Association.
- Currently co-chairs the Advocacy Committee of MichAuto, a statewide program of the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce focused on growing the automotive and mobility industries in Michigan and driving automotive and mobility policy in Michigan.

Awards and Recognition

- Named to *DBusiness* Top Lawyers (2025)
- Named 2023 Leading Lawyer In Michigan

- Peer review rated as AV Preeminent®, the highest performance rating in the Martindale-Hubbell® Peer Review Ratings™ system
- Recognized, *JD Supra* Readers' Choice Awards in the field of M&A (2021)
- Selected by his peers for inclusion in *The Best Lawyers in America*® in the field of Government Relations (2018-2024)
- Named the *Best Lawyers*® Government Relations "Lawyer of the Year" in Detroit (2020)
- Named a leading business law attorney in Michigan by *Chambers*® USA (2008-2010, 2016-2024)
- Named as one of the "500 Most Powerful Business Leaders in Metro Detroit" by *D*Business magazine (2019-2023)
- Recommended by *The Legal 500* for his work in M&A (2015-2017)
- "Leader in the Law" designation from *Michigan Lawyers Weekly* (2015)
- Selected for inclusion to the *Michigan Super Lawyers*® list in the field of M&A (2006-2010)

Affiliations

Steve serves or has served on the boards of directors of the:

- Michigan Strategic Fund
- Michigan Economic Growth Authority
- Michigan Emergency Loan Management Board
- Michigan Land Bank Fast Track Authority
- Michigan Governor's Talent Investment Board
- Investment Advisory Committee to the Michigan State Treasury overseeing the state's pension funds
- Forgotten Harvest, Inc.
- NextEnergy Center
- Investment Committee of Invest Detroit
- He is also a member of the following legal organizations:
 - Member, Business Law, Administrative Law, Government Law and International Law Sections of the State Bar of Michigan
 - Member, American Bar Association, Business Law Section

Firm Leadership

- Co-chair, Foley's Electrified Mobility & Infrastructure (EV) initiative
- Co-chair, of the Smart Manufacturing initiative,
- Member, Manufacturing Sector Advisory Board
- Two terms as managing partner of the Detroit office (2002-2006, 2009-2011)

Thought Leadership

- Instructor, American Counsel of Corporate Attorneys (corporate, M&A, economic development, and government affairs topics)

- Instructor, “The Board’s Role in M&A” and “The Board’s Role in Talent Development and Site Selection,” National Directors Institute
- Co-founder and Instructor, Wayne State University Commercial Law Clinic
- Lecturer, “Drafting Asset Purchase Agreements and Related Documents” and “Formation and Initial Operation of Business Enterprises-Financing Issues,” Michigan Institute of Continuing Legal Education
- Participated in numerous programs focused on advanced automotive technologies in Detroit, Palo Alto, Boston, New York, and London, including:
 - Presenter, update on U.S. autonomous and electric vehicle legal developments, *Financial Times*’ “Future of the Car Summit” (May 2019)
 - Co-chair, I “Concordant Crossroads” program, New York, NY (October 2018)

Sectors

- [Automotive](#)
- [Energy & Infrastructure](#)
- [Energy Transition](#)
- [Environmental & Product Stewardship](#)
- [Manufacturing](#)
- [Racial Justice & Equity](#)
- [Smart Manufacturing](#)
- [Supply Chain](#)

Practice Areas

- [Corporate](#)
- [Finance](#)
- [Financial Institutions](#)
- [Private Equity](#)
- [Transactions](#)
- [Venture & Growth Capital](#)

Education

- Northwestern University (J.D., magna cum laude, 1987)
 - Member, Order of the Coif
 - Editor-in-chief, *Northwestern University Law Review* (1986-87)
- University of Michigan (B.B.A., with high distinction, 1984)
 - Member, Phi Beta Kappa
 - Recipient, William A. Paton Award for achieving the highest score on the May 1984 Michigan CPA examination

Admissions

- Michigan

- Illinois