

**Monday, March 8, 2021**

Article 4

## Michigan Mourns Frank Kelley

Outpourings of grief and reminiscences rippled across Michigan following the death of longtime former Attorney General Frank Kelley, including from politicians of both parties, businesspeople and faith leaders.

Mr. Kelley, who held his post for 37 years from 1961 to 1999, died Friday at the age of 96 years (see separate story).

Nicknamed the "eternal general," Mr. Kelley is remembered as one of the longest-serving attorneys general in U.S. history (a record broken in 2019 by Tom Miler of Iowa, however he still holds the record of longest continuous service).

In a statement, **Governor Gretchen Whitmer** said that Mr. Kelley "was one of my absolute favorite people from whom to get advice, perspective, or humor."

"He was a never-ending fount of wisdom and fun. From his college days to the battles, he fought as Michigan's longest serving attorney general, he always had stories and insight into the human condition and generosity of time," the governor said. "I know I am among countless, fortunate people who had the honor of working with the brilliant and irascible Frank J. Kelley. He will be missed but his mark on Michigan will be felt – as generations were benefited by his leadership. His endorsement of and counsel to candidates like me meant as much to us as it did to the public we hoped to serve. I'll forever be grateful to my friend, Mr. Kelley."

Ms. Whitmer on Saturday ordered U.S. and Michigan flags to be lowered to half-mast within the Capitol building and on all public buildings across the state until March 20.

In a separate statement, current **Attorney General Dana Nessel** said she joins the state's mourning of Mr. Kelley with "a heavy heart."

"Mr. Kelley was an extraordinary man, the quintessential public servant, and a legend in his own time," Ms. Nessel said. "During those many years of service, he was a beacon to the state, a mentor to many, and a valued advisor to notable public officials. And his energy and genuine passion for public service inspired countless others to likewise dedicate their talents in service to the people of Michigan."

The current attorney general also touted his individual accomplishments during his tenure, including being the first attorney general in the country to establish Consumer Protection, Criminal Fraud, and Environmental Protection divisions; his influence on the passage of the Open Meetings Act and the Freedom of Information Act; his leading work on the tobacco settlement; and his presidency of the National Association of Attorneys General. The group later honored Mr. Kelley by naming after him its most prestigious award – the Kelley-Wyman Award for outstanding service and national contributions.

"As extraordinary as his accomplishments were, many will best remember Mr. Kelley for his humor, friendship, and humanity. He will be sorely missed," she said.

Joining the chorus of respects was Senate Majority Leader Jim Ananich (D-Flint) who called him "one of a kind."

"His decades-long career as attorney general was dedicated to delivering justice, corporate accountability and a safer environment," Mr. Ananich said in a statement. "While many may not realize it, every Michigan resident's life is better in some way because of Frank's service. Our hearts are with the Kelley family as they mourn their loss, and we hope they find peace knowing that he left our state a better place than he found it."

Members of the business community also shared recollections of Mr. Kelley and support for his family.

"I am deeply saddened to hear of the passing of my friend and mentor Mr. Frank Kelley. He is one of the remarkable people of our time. As the longest serving state attorney general in U.S. history, he earned the distinction of being called the people's lawyer," said Daniel Loepp, president and CEO of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan. "Frank Kelley made a better life for the people of Michigan and set an amazing example for those who worked for him, with him or were inspired by him. I was fortunate to be one of the many people who worked for Mr. Kelley and was deeply impacted by him from the first day. Our condolences go out to the entire Kelley family."

A devout Catholic and a graduate of University of Detroit, Mr. Kelley's death also drew condolences from members of his faith community, including Michigan Catholic Conference President and CEO Paul Long and former president Sister Monica Kostielney, who served in the role from 1983 to 2010.

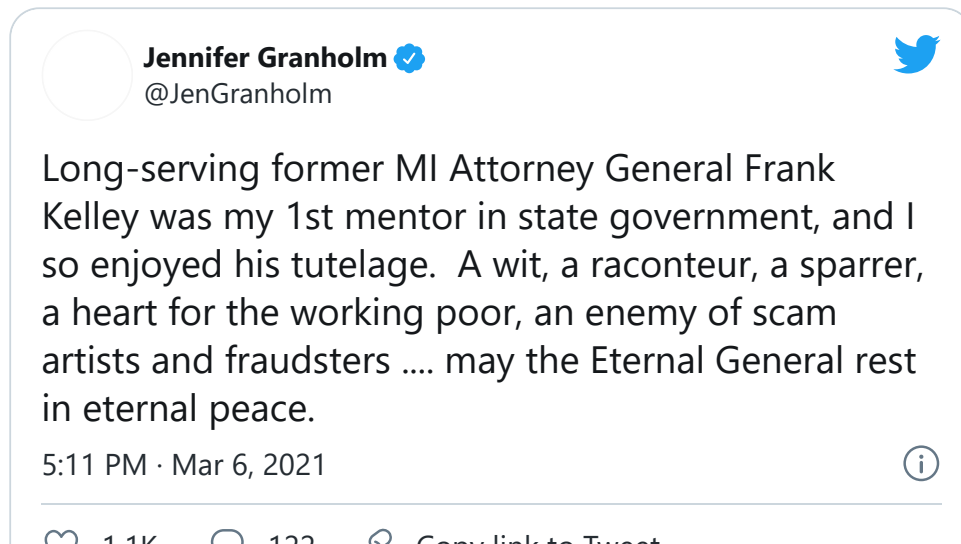
"Mr. Kelley was a great man who had a deep and abiding faith," Mr. Long said in a statement. "That faith guided him every day he served the people of Michigan. Mr. Kelley was a practical and prudent politician and public servant who lived his Catholic faith in his work to advance the common good. He was a model of faith in action, having established a level of professionalism to which many others can only aspire. May God rest his noble soul."



Ms. Kostielney called his life "a panoply of ideas and events that invite talk, thought, reflection, and laughter."

"His life, as Michigan's attorney general, defined leadership in law and service to the people during his long and steady commitment to social justice as an integral value for society, not a trend; he personified compassion with respect and ecumenism that was universal," Ms. Kostielney said. "Frank Kelley was a wise man with deep and ancient values. He blended keen political wisdom with a common touch that was never aristocratic."


Prior to leaving office in 1999, the conference's Board of Directors honored Mr. Kelley with an original painting, presented to him by Catholic Cardinal Adam Maida, who was then chairman of the MCC board.




Several other shared their respects on Twitter.



**Jennifer Granholm**   
@JenGranholm 

Long-serving former MI Attorney General Frank Kelley was my 1st mentor in state government, and I so enjoyed his tutelage. A wit, a raconteur, a sparrer, a heart for the working poor, an enemy of scam artists and fraudsters .... may the Eternal General rest in eternal peace.

5:11 PM · Mar 6, 2021 

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**johntruscott**  
@johntruscott 

RIP Mr. Kelley. I Remember the State of the State where Gov. Engler mentioned President Lincoln and how Frank Kelley knows the story because he was there. Those joking lines were fondly and lovingly uttered in appreciation of your dedication and service.

12:41 PM · Mar 6, 2021 

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Former Governor John Engler called Mr. Kelley a "gifted elected official" who succeeded as a candidate and as the state's top lawyer.

"His professionalism and political skills were impressive. He was my lawyer and true to his word we always could consult with General Kelley and his fine legal team about issues or concerns. This was done in confidence and never once was there a breach of the trust we had in each other," Mr. Engler said in a statement. "Certainly there were times when we may have differed on the wisdom of a decision but his office as a result of his leadership always represented the governor's office with great effectiveness. I could not have had a finer lawyer. Frank Kelley was a joy to work with and through regular meetings with him my knowledge of Michigan politics was greatly enhanced."

And former Governor Jim Blanchard, whom Mr. Kelley hired into the Department of Attorney General, said Mr. Kelley was a legend.

"Frank J. Kelley was not just a legend in Michigan politics, he was a giant in American public service," he said. "He belongs to an era of civility, decency, non-partisanship and respect for others and the rule of law. Frank ran his attorney general's office with integrity and honor for four decades. Frank Kelley was a pioneer in consumer protection and environmental protection, indeed among the first champions in the United States. Frank Kelley was a mentor to thousands of young lawyers, judges and aspiring public servants. I was one, and I will be forever grateful for Frank's help, support and lifetime of friendship."

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