

Plunkett Cooney mourns passing of partner, DEI Director Laurel F. McGiffert

January 23, 2024

On Jan. 14, Plunkett Cooney lost beloved partner and the firm's first Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Laurel F. McGiffert, who passed away unexpectedly. She was 75.

Visitation for Laurel will be held from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Jan. 25, at Kemp Funeral Home, 24585 Evergreen Rd. in Southfield MI 48075. The funeral will take place at 11 a.m. on Jan. 26 at the Word of Faith Christian Center, 20000 W. Nine Mile, Southfield, MI 48075. McGiffert is survived by her husband Leonard McMahon, daughters Lisa McGiffert and Nicole Henry (Kevin), sons Leonard McMahon, Jr. and Christopher McMahon, and one grandchild.

"Laurel was a tremendous trial attorney and beloved by many clients and colleagues across the state," said Plunkett Cooney President & CEO Jeff Gerish. "We will also remember Laurel as a champion of diversity, equity and inclusion. We are all better for having had Laurel in our lives. Laurel was as wonderful a person as I and many of us have ever met."

Before taking on the role as Plunkett Cooney's DEI Director, McGiffert worked for nearly 40 years as one of Michigan's most accomplished medical liability and governmental law attorneys. She resolved countless disputes through pre-trial motion practice and routinely won jury trials with her attention to detail, surgical lines of questioning and ability to explain complex medical and legal issues to jurors, who also appreciated her warm smile and calm demeanor.

The list of honors and awards McGiffert won during her years in practice and as a DEI director are voluminous. Some highlights include Savoy magazine's "2022 Most Influential Black Lawyers" honor, the 2017 Earl J. Cline/Sherwin Schreier Award for Excellence from the Negligence Law Section of the State Bar of Michigan, the 2012 Michigan Association for Justice Respected Advocate Award, and induction into the Michigan Lawyers Weekly Hall of Fame in 2021.

McGiffert always gave back to the profession she loved. She was a member of numerous bar associations, including the State Bar Michigan's Ethics Committee (1989-1993), the Detroit Metropolitan Bar Association, the Wolverine Bar Association, the American Board of Trial Advocates, the Michigan Defense Trial Counsel and ALFA International's DEI Leaders Forum and DEI Committee.

PLUNKETT COONEY MOURNS PASSING OF PARTNER, DEI DIRECTOR LAUREL F. MCGIFFERT Cont.

In addition, McGiffert found time to volunteer in her church and community. Her resume is full of examples of her legacy of service, including the Oakland Mediation Center (Board of Directors), Power Company Kids Club (Board of Directors), American Heart Association (Volunteer Fund Raiser), Muscular Dystrophy Association (Volunteer Fund Raiser), Wayne County Easter Seal Society (Board of Directors, 1982-1990; President, Board of Directors, 1988-1990), CATCH - Caring Athletes Team for Children's and Henry Ford Hospitals (Board of Trustees, past member).

McGiffert earned her undergraduate degree in 1970 from Vassar College and went on to graduate from Wayne State University Law School in 1980. She joined the firm in 1989 after working for several years in the City of Detroit Law Department. She was named a partner just two years later in 1991, the first African American woman to achieve this milestone.

For more information about Laurel F. McGiffert, contact the firm's Director of Marketing and Business Development John Cornwell at (248) 901-4008; jcornwell@plunkettcooney.com.

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