Chief of the Month: Joseph E. Potchen, Chief, Consumer Protection Bureau, Michigan Attorney General’s Office

Each month, the Center for Consumer Protection will provide an article about an Attorney General’s Office Consumer Protection Chief.

“Si Quaeris Peninsulam Amoenam Circumspice”
"If you seek a pleasant peninsula, look about you."

A version of the State of Michigan’s motto is on display every day at the Michigan Attorney General’s office. I am blessed to work with pleasant people everywhere I look. It is also a privilege to be working on consumer protection matters under Attorney General Dana Nessel, who has made consumer protection one of her key priorities since taking office earlier this year.

Before joining the Michigan AG’s office in 1994, I spent four years practicing law in Chicago, where I met my wonderful wife. After the birth of our first child, I moved back to my home state and started with the office under Attorney General Frank Kelley – also known as the “Eternal General” because he served in the position for 37 years.

Initially, I worked in our Public Employment & Elections Division, focusing on employment law cases. Other than a one-year assignment in our Executive Division, I worked in that Division almost 14 years. It was a fantastic experience as I was able to get into court often and represent state agencies in numerous federal and state lawsuits.

In 2008, I was promoted to the First Assistant in our Health, Education and Family Services Division. In 2013, I was promoted again to the Division Chief position in our Corporate Oversight Division, where I currently serve. The Corporate Oversight Division handles matters involving consumer protection enforcement, antitrust, charitable trusts, corporations, securities, insurance, banking and public health. And in 2015 – after some Department restructuring, I was assigned to be one of seven Bureau Chiefs in the Department.

Since 2016, I have served as the Consumer Protection Bureau Chief and oversee five other Divisions – Consumer Protection, Licensing & Regulation, Health Care Fraud, Alcohol & Gaming, and Public Service. Along with my managerial responsibilities, I am also one of the office’s Emergency Management Coordinators.
Under Attorney General Nessel, the office has refocused to become more active in consumer protection. Examples of the increased efforts include being one of the first states in the country to address take-home sexual assault evidence kits and we plan to file our state’s first ever lawsuit alleging violations of the Federal Consumer Financial Protection Act. From going after unlawful puppy mills to announcing a significant initiative to address the scourge of robocalls, AG Nessel remains laser focused on helping consumers.

In addition to my work at the Attorney General’s office, for almost 15 years, I have taught both business law and a business ethics courses at the Eli Broad Graduate School of Management at Michigan State University. I have also taught business law and business ethics classes in Sydney, Australia. As you can see from the picture, diving in the Great Barrier Reef was one of my most exciting life experiences. I am married with three children and I enjoy traveling and running.