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### Making Michigan Courts Better: On "Good Measurement And A Commitment To Follow The Data"



The [Governor](#), [Chief Justice](#), and the [State Court Administrator](#) are advancing easily accessible and understandable performance measures as a means to improve the delivery of services to the public. The efforts underway in the judicial branch, I'm happy to say, are in line with the recommendations of the State Bar's [Judicial Crossroads Task Force](#), which, among other reforms, called for greater accountability through better data and transparency. Obviously, like all reforms, it's possible to do this well or ill, and getting it right will take a lot of attention, including good faith participation and intelligent critique of members of the bar. On Friday I attended a meeting of the State Court

Administrative Office's Trial Court Performance Measures Committee, chaired by Kent County circuit judge Paul Sullivan, and can attest that the efforts to get it right are serious, open-minded, and vigorous. Right after the meeting, I ran across a [Wall Street Journal op-ed](#) by Bill Gates that captures why good measurement and a commitment to follow the data is important and holds promise for making progress on problems that have resisted our best efforts for, well, centuries. From his piece:

You can achieve incredible progress if you set a clear goal and find a measure that will drive progress toward that goal.

This may seem basic, but it is amazing how often it is not done and how hard it is to get right.

One of the greatest successes in terms of using measurement to drive global change has been an agreement signed in 2000 by the United Nations. The Millennium Development Goals, supported by 189 nations, set 2015 as a deadline for making specific percentage improvements across a set of crucial areas—such as health, education and basic income. Many people assumed the pact would be filed away and forgotten like so many U.N. and government pronouncements. The decades before had brought many well-meaning declarations to combat problems from nutrition to human rights, but most lacked a road map for measuring progress.

However, the Millennium goals were backed by a broad consensus, were clear and concrete, and brought focus to the highest priorities.

This seems like basic good sense, but cynicism, inertia, fear, and self-interest often undermine efforts to gather data and act upon what the data reveal. It's right to be concerned and careful about data and measurement. It's also right to be hopeful. Pay attention; be heard. The State Bar will help you do both.

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