

Sarah J. Gabis

Member

Ann Arbor

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Sarah J. Gabis has over 15 years of experience helping public entities address a wide variety of municipal issues.

Her expertise encompasses virtually all of her municipal clients' legal concerns. She advises township boards, city councils, brownfield authorities, downtown development authorities, planning commissions, and similar government entities on all matters relating to municipal governance. She also advises municipal clients on matters involving zoning and land use enforcement, development agreements, police departments, sewer and water infrastructure, public-private partnerships, mobile home park development and regulation, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) questions, Open Meetings Act matters, intergovernmental agreements, annexation, and Act 425 matters.

She has also represented many municipalities with municipal prosecutions and served as a state prosecutor for DuPage County, Illinois. As state prosecutor, she represented dozens of municipalities with prosecution

practices & industries

Municipal Law and
Government Relations

education

Loyola University Chicago
School of Law, J.D. *cum
laude*

Michigan State University,
B.S., M.S.W.

admissions

Kentucky
Michigan

court admissions

U.S. District Ct., E.D. Mich.

matters and served as a member of the Law Department for the City of Chicago.

As a law student, Sarah earned a national championship as a Corboy Mock Trial fellow and participated in the American Bar Association Moot Court competition.

She is admitted to practice before the U.S. District Courts for the Eastern Districts of Michigan.

HONORS, AWARDS, AND RECOGNITION

- *D*Business Magazine “Top Lawyers” 2025, Municipal Law

CIVIC, CULTURAL, AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

- Ridgedale Players Community Theater, Board of Directors

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- State Bar of Michigan
 - Administrative & Regulatory Law Section
 - Criminal Law Section
 - Government Law Section
- Kentucky Bar Association
- Oakland County Bar Association

PUBLICATIONS

- Author, “Michigan Supreme Court Holds that a Tax Cannot be Disguised as a Franchise Fee in Violation of Headlee,” Bodman Municipal Law Update (February 4, 2025)
- Co-author, “Michigan Court of Appeals Provides Clarification Related to a Municipality’s Grant or Denial of Special Land Use Permit Applications,” Bodman Municipal Law Update (November 21, 2024)
- “Court of Appeals Rules that Voter-Initiated Charter Amendments Cannot Be Used to Implement Local

Regulations Under the MRTMA,” Bodman Municipal Law Update (September 6, 2024)

- *Social Districts Fact Sheet*, Michigan Municipal League (2021)

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

- “Is a Social District Right for Your Township?” Michigan Townships Association Annual Conference (2022)

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- Former Adjunct Professor of NITA Trial Skills, Western Michigan University Thomas M. Cooley Law School

REPRESENTATIVE MATTERS

- Implemented a multi-million dollar special assessment district with EGLE and special federal financing for sewer system improvement and extension.
- Litigated through trial a complex sewer treatment plant capacity suit involving issues of annexation.
- As lead counsel for a municipality, litigated and successfully negotiated settlement of a complex sewer treatment service breach of contract action between two municipalities and a school district.
- Litigated to the Michigan Court of Appeals the enforcement of a zoning ordinance to prohibit the expansion of a non-conforming use and prevent the establishment of a marina in a residentially zoned property.
- Assisted in the development of all contractual agreements related to a complex Act 425 agreement to facilitate a mixed-use development benefiting both the township and the city.
- Litigated in the Court of Claims a multi-million dollar lawsuit between a county and the State of Michigan involving the provision of community mental health services.

- Established social districts for cities under Section 551 of the Michigan Liquor Control Code.
- Assisted in the development of public-private partnerships for large municipal development projects.