LaBrant to Retire From Michigan Chamber in March 2012

LANSING, Mich., Jan. 10, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- The Michigan Chamber of Commerce today announced that Robert S. LaBrant, who directed the Chamber's nationally-recognized political and legal programs for 34 years, will retire at the end of March 2012.

(Photo: http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20101130/DE09210-a)

"For 34 years, Bob LaBrant has been the Chamber's leader in the political arena where he has been a tireless advocate for employer participation in the political process," said Michigan Chamber President & CEO Rich Studley. "Equally important for those of us who have had the privilege of working with Bob, he has been an excellent role model, great colleague and extraordinary friend."

A retirement reception will be held at the Michigan Chamber's headquarters in Lansing on February 1st from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. to mark the 40th anniversary of LaBrant's career as a Chamber Executive, which began on that date in 1972 at the Appleton, Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce.

LaBrant, 65, has participated in 17 election cycles since starting at the Michigan Chamber on July 18, 1977. In the 1970's, LaBrant was a pioneer nationally in organizing corporate, association and chamber political action committees. In addition, LaBrant has been active in the redistricting process in Michigan over the past four decades (1980-2010).

During his career, LaBrant aggressively pursued campaign finance legislation, Department of State rulings, campaign finance complaints and political litigation.

One of the lawsuits the Michigan Chamber initiated –*Austin v. Michigan Chamber of Commerce*– was decided by the U.S. Supreme Court twice. In 2010, in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission,* the U.S. Supreme Court specifically reversed its 1990 decision in *Austin.* The landmark ruling in *Citizens United* now permits corporations all across the nation to make independent expenditures expressly advocating the election or defeat of candidates.

LaBrant was an architect behind legislation that leveled the playing field between labor union PACs and corporate PACs (1994 PA 117). That legislation, which banned contributions from mandatory union dues, was upheld in *Michigan State AFL-CIO v. Miller* in 1997 by the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals.

LaBrant successfully challenged in 1998-2000 the ability of the State Bar of Michigan, as a public body, to operate LAWPAC and use the State Bar's mandatory dues invoice to collect LAWPAC contributions. For that activity, *Michigan Lawyers Weekly* named LaBrant as one of their "Lawyers of the Year" in 1999.

The Michigan Chamber has also been a leader since the mid-1990's in state judicial elections.

In 2011, the Michigan Supreme Court in *MEA v. Secretary of State* upheld the legal basis for Interpretive Statements LaBrant initiated back in 2005-06 which held that public bodies were prohibited from administering PAC payroll deduction programs for public employee unions.

LaBrant says his most satisfying legal victory occurred in 2008 when a Michigan Chamber-assembled "legal dream team" successfully blocked a highly partisan petition drive that would have made over 42 changes to Michigan's Constitution (*Reform Michigan Government Now!*). The courts ruled the proposal ineligible and off the November 2008 statewide ballot.

In 2010, LaBrant successfully led the ballot question committee that opposed Proposal 1 – the call for a new constitutional convention, which was defeated with a 66% "No" vote.

LaBrant has served on four transition teams: Governor-Elect John Engler (1990); Secretary of State-Elect Candice Miller (1994); Attorney General-Elect Mike Cox (2002); and Secretary of State-Elect Ruth Johnson (2010).

LaBrant is a past President of the Michigan Political History Society and a past Chairman of the Advisory Board of the Michigan Political Leadership Program at Michigan State University.

LaBrant was an adjunct faculty member at Lansing Community College (1984-1998). He and the late Tom Downs taught an election law course together at the Thomas M. Cooley Law School.

LaBrant has been inducted into the Michigan Association Hall of Fame. In 2011, he was named by *Campaigns & Elections*

magazine as one of the "Top 100 Influencers in Michigan" and has received numerous professional awards.

The Michigan Chamber of Commerce is a statewide business organization representing approximately 6,800 employers, trade associations and local chambers of commerce. The Michigan Chamber represents businesses of every size and type in all 83 counties of the state. The Chamber was established in 1959 to be an advocate for Michigan's job providers in the legislative, political and legal process. It is one of only four state chambers of commerce in the nation accredited by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

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