

**Dedication Speech for the Leelanau County Gov't Center  
Justice Elizabeth "Betty" Weaver  
May 18, 2008**

What a privilege and a joy to be here in our beautiful Leelanau County at this dedication of our new Government Center.

Over my 34 years as a judge, particularly, my last 14 years as a Supreme Court Justice, I have had many occasions to visit every one of the county buildings and courthouses in all Michigan's 83 counties and 252 courts— from the shores of Lake Superior in the UP, to Michigan's southern border, and all the county court buildings in between.

In my travels, detecting my accent, I am often asked, "Justice Weaver, where are you from"? Then I raise my ever-"hand"y Michigan map and proudly point out "I'm from Leelanau County," which is the crown jewel of our beautiful state. People always say, "Oh Leelanau, you are so blessed to live there." It's true, we are!!!

Over the past years, we Leelanau citizens came to realize that our outgrown county court facilities in Leland and elsewhere had ceased to measure up to the standards of excellence that we in Leelanau demand of ourselves, our government, and our leaders.

Now today we appreciate the hard work of the recent county boards, many others, and particularly the early leadership of then-County Board Chair, Jean Watkoski; current-Board Chair, Bob Hawley; and County Administrator, Dave Gill, to bring to fruition this new county government center that represents Leelanau County's prized example of how to provide proper, efficient government services to the people in an appropriate, economical, practical, and beautiful way.

Recently, I had the privilege of touring this fine facility. And, as you tour today, you will see that we can be proud of this new county government center. I believe that it is tops—#1 in the state!!!

A bit about the building—

- It not only houses 16 county departments as well as the circuit, district, probate and family courts, but also represents a state-of-the-art “green building” to ensure continued preservation of our beautiful Leelanau environment.
- You will recognize all the economies it possesses with the use of efficient energy, the logical and convenient location of offices, entrances, and court rooms in a spacious, bright, and pleasant environment. Even the siting of the building itself and all the tranquil views out of the windows are something to behold.
- And while touring the building, I found much joy expressed by the people serving here to have such pleasant, beautiful, and practical surroundings in which to work.
- And as a Justice, I appreciate the detailed thought and technical provisions for efficiency and safety that have gone into meeting the needs of the courts.

With this building, Leelanau County is now #1 for having the most beautiful, the most functional, the most ecologically and environmentally friendly county government building in the state. And of course Leelanau remains #1 in Michigan for natural beauty. It is rightfully called the “land of delight,” and it should be known as the “land of opportunity” for everyone, and particularly #1 for women serving in elected public office.

Do you know that Leelanau County is the only county in Michigan that can “claim as its own” the following?—

- The first woman ever elected in Michigan as a county prosecutor—Emelia Schaub—back in 1936.
- The only woman in the state to be elected a County Commissioner, a State Representative, a State Senator, and Lt. Governor—Connie Binsfield—all since 1970.
- The only woman in the state to be elected a Probate Judge, a Court of Appeals Judge, a Supreme Court Justice and Chief Justice—Elizabeth “Betty” Weaver—all since 1974.
- And all 3 of these women – Schaub, Binsfield, and Weaver -- have been inducted into the Michigan Women’s Hall of Fame.

Further, Leelanau County now has a woman State Senator—Michelle McManus, who first served as a State Rep., and who is now being considered around the state as a possible candidate for Secretary of State in 2010.

And further, Leelanau County has had a woman county board chair—Jean Watkoski—as well as—

- 7 Women elected to the County Board—Connie Binsfield, Marie Porter, Kathleen Craker Firestone, Rochelle Steimel, Melinda Lautner, Jean Watkoski, Mary Tonneberger
- 3 Women elected County Clerk—Margaret Weinert, Dorothy Wunderlich, Michelle Crocker
- 2 Women elected County Prosecutor—Emelia Schaub, Sara Brubaker
- 2 Women elected Register of Deeds—Helen Korson, Barbara Kirt
- 1 Woman elected County Treasurer—Vicky Kilway
- 1 Woman elected Probate Judge—Elizabeth “Betty” Weaver

Indeed, Leelanau County is #1 in many, many ways.

Finally, I, as you, am most grateful to be a citizen of Leelanau, and for all citizens we give thanks to those who have contributed to this remarkable building we dedicate today—a symbol of common-sense government—that will certainly serve the people of Leelanau and Michigan for generations to come.

May God continue to bless Leelanau County and the state of Michigan.

Thank you.

Elizabeth “Betty” Weaver