



GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
LANSING

GARLIN GILCHRIST II  
LT. GOVERNOR

## EXECUTIVE ORDER

No. 2020-139

### Naming the “Elliott-Larsen Building”

Michigan law enshrines certain civil rights and protections against discrimination. Section 2 of article 1 of the Michigan Constitution of 1963 provides that “[n]o person shall . . . be denied the enjoyment of his civil or political rights or be discriminated against in the exercise thereof because of religion, race, color or national origin.” This section further obligates the legislature to implement this right by legislation. In 1976 the people of Michigan, led by Daisy Elliott, a former Democratic member of the Michigan House of Representatives, and Melvin Larsen, a former Republican member of the Michigan House of Representatives, made a down payment on this promise with passage of Public Act 453.

This Act, known as the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act, declared that the right to be free from discrimination is a civil right and expanded the above constitutional protections to a broader class of individuals. In particular, the 1976 Act provided as follows:

The opportunity to obtain employment, housing and other real estate, and the full and equal utilization of public accommodations, public service, and educational facilities without discrimination because of religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, height, weight, familial status, or marital status as prohibited by this act, is recognized and declared to be a civil right.

1976 PA 453, subsequently amended by 1992 PA 124, MCL 37.2102(1).

In addition to defining “civil rights” and expanding the scope of the protection provided by Michigan’s constitution, the Act gave the Civil Rights Commission a means to investigate and address complaints of discrimination and gave individuals the right to seek relief from the courts. MCL 37.2601–2606; MCL 37.2801. Thanks to Representatives Elliott and Larsen, and those who supported their effort, the protection of civil rights in Michigan took a giant step forward. For this reason, Michigan is grateful.

The naming of state-owned buildings is a means to honor the contributions of some of Michigan’s most exceptional citizens and public servants. It is also an expression of values. For example, the legislature, in 2005 PA 209, renamed the Treasury Building in

honor of Richard H. Austin who was Michigan's first African American certified public accountant and the first African American elected to a statewide office in the executive branch when Michiganders chose him to be Secretary of State in 1970. Later, in 2012 PA 486, the legislature named the walkway between the Michigan Hall of Justice and the Capitol Building as the Frank J. Kelley Walkway in honor of Attorney General Kelley's 37 years of service. In addition to the above honors bestowed by the legislature, Governor Engler, in Executive Order 1991-26, ordered that the state-owned building located at 608 West Allegan Street in Lansing be named "the John A. Hannah Building" in honor of the renowned former president of Michigan State University and administrator of the United States Agency for International Development.

Likewise, I find it fitting to honor Melvin Larsen and the late Daisy Elliott. Together, their names have become synonymous in Michigan with the protection of civil rights. To memorialize their achievement and what it means for all Michiganders—and to remind us of the work that remains—this order extends honors similar to those bestowed on Richard H. Austin, Frank J. Kelley, John A. Hannah, and other extraordinary civil servants.

As directed below, this order renames the Lewis Cass Building as the Elliott-Larsen Building. No one can deny the important role that Lewis Cass (1782-1866) played in Michigan's and this nation's early history. But the names we elevate express our values: to the workers who enter those halls every day and to the public who those workers serve. Cass owned a slave; defended a system to permit the expansion of slavery; and implemented a policy that forcibly removed Native Americans from their tribal lands. Today's order is a small, but meaningful step forward as we seek to better express our shared values.

Section 1 of article 5 of the Michigan Constitution of 1963 vests the executive power of the State of Michigan in the governor.

Section 8 of article 5 of the Michigan Constitution of 1963 places each principal department under the supervision of the governor unless otherwise provided by the constitution.

Consistent with the above and acting under the Michigan Constitution of 1963 and Michigan law, I order the following:

1. In honor of Daisy Elliott's and Melvin Larsen's efforts to protect the civil rights of the people of this state, the state-owned office building that is currently known as the Lewis Cass Building and is located at 320 South Walnut Street, Lansing, MI 48933, will hereafter be named the "Elliott-Larsen Building."
2. This order is effective immediately and the Department of Management, Technology and Budget will begin efforts to implement this order and update the signage of the Elliott-Larsen Building as soon as practicable.

Given under my hand and the Great Seal of the State of Michigan.



Date: June 30, 2020

Time: 9:45 am

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GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

By the Governor:

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SECRETARY OF STATE