



Meet the Speakers

for the December 5, 2025 Program

Listed in Order of Presentation

9:15 AM – Stories from the Field: Successful Renewals and Best Practices for 2026

Chadd Hodkinson, Area Senior Vice President, Gallagher Benefit Services

Chadd Hodkinson is the Area Senior Vice President and joined Gallagher Benefit Services in 2015. He has over 15 years' experience in the employee benefits industry and over 25 years of professional experience consulting with public sector organizations to solve various business challenges.

Chadd leads the Michigan public sector practice for the Gallagher Bloomfield Hills office and is a frequent attendee and speaker at various public sector conferences in Michigan and nationally. He regularly consults with Michigan public sector organizations on benefits and human resources strategy to ensure stability and sustainability for benefit program structure and cost.

Jeff Nielson, Area Vice President | Michigan Public Sector, Gallagher Benefit Services

Jeff joined Gallagher in February 2024, bringing in 35+ years of experience in the employee benefit industry, including his focus on the Michigan market since 1997. He supports clients in the areas of strategic benefit plan assessment, design and pricing, vendor procurement, program implementation, and administration. He has expertise working with Medicare plans and with mental health and wellbeing providers.

Jeff has worked for major consulting firms and both national and regional insurance carriers. He has extensive experience working with public sector organizations, along with work in the automotive, retail, higher education, and energy sectors.

Jeff received his B.A. degree from Northwestern University. He and his wife have five children and two grandchildren and live in Grass Lake. Jeff has enjoyed both public service and board membership roles, serving as an elected school board official and on a number of non-profit boards.

11:30 AM – No Settlement in Sight – What Now?

Katherine Broaddus, Attorney, Thrun Law Firm, PC

Katherine Broaddus joined Thrun Law Firm in August 2013. She received her undergraduate degrees in Sociology and Social Work from Western Michigan University (B.S.W., B.S. 2000) and received her Juris Doctorate from Valparaiso University School of Law (J.D. 2004). While in law school, Katie was a two-year member of the Moot Court Honors Society, a quarter finalist at the Luther M. Swygert Moot Court Competition, and the William E. McGee Civil Rights Moot Court Competition at the University of Minnesota Law School. Before entering law school, she was employed as a social worker to children with developmental disabilities. After law school, she practiced for seven years at a Farmington Hills law firm that represented school districts, intermediate school districts, and public-school academies. Katie's practice focuses on the areas of general school law, labor and employment law, student issues, and special education law. Katie is a member of the State Bar of Michigan and the American Bar Association. She is also a member of the Michigan Council of School Attorneys and the National School Boards Association Council of School Attorneys. In 2010, Katie was elected to the Board of Directors of the Michigan Council of School Attorneys and served in that position for two terms. She served as President of the Michigan Council of School Attorneys in 2014 – 2015.

Katie has published numerous articles on various topics in education law. In 2013 and 2014, she was selected as a "Rising Star" in the education law practice area by Michigan Super Lawyers magazine.

Katie lives in Grand Rapids with her husband and three children. She and her family are active parishioners at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Grand Rapids.

1:30 PM – Effective Use of Outside Counsel, 10 Things You Should Know

Richard W. Fanning, Sr. Counsel, Clark Hill

Richard W. Fanning, Jr. is an experienced labor and employment attorney and human resources executive. His experience as a lawyer and in HR leadership at a large university gives him a unique perspective focusing on legal representation that delivers practical results. Rick delivers legal solutions that align with an organization's mission, vision, and values and their organizational capacity.

Rick has more than two decades of working with private and public sector employers in all areas of labor relations. He represents a broad range of clients in collective bargaining, arbitration, contract interpretation, drafting and application of employment policies and handbooks, and positive employee relations strategies. He frequently represents clients in representational matters and unfair labor practice charge proceedings before the National Labor Relations Board and state bodies such as the Michigan Employment Relations Commission. He advises clients in all aspects of labor and employment law, including matters arising under the National Labor Relations Act, Family Medical Leave Act, the Fair Labor Standards Act, Title VII, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act, state labor and employment laws, and responding to allegations of discrimination and harassment. Rick also represents educational institutions, including institutions of higher education, in labor and employment matters.

Rick is a Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) Certified Senior Professional and was the director of employee relations at a large Big Ten university where he was a member of the human resources executive team. He also served as chief negotiator and was responsible for labor and employee relations matters, including staff employee discipline, the ADA accommodation process, assisting in the response to claims of discrimination and harassment, and unemployment claims processing. He also served as the Interim Associate Vice President for Human Resources for 10 months.

Rick is a recognized authority on labor and employment law. He conducts frequent training and presentations. He is the past president of the Michigan Public Employer Labor Relations Association.

Industries

Automotive & Manufacturing
Construction
Transportation & Logistics
Education
Healthcare
Retail

Practice Areas

Labor & Employment
Municipal Law

Employment

Michigan State University, September 2017-March 2023

Director of Employee Relations

Interim Associate Vice President August 2021-May 2022

Keller, Thoma PC

Sept 1997-August 2017

Law Clerk to Managing Partner

Michigan Supreme Court

September 1996-September 1997

Judicial Law Clerk to Honorable James H Briley,
Chief Justice

Education

J.D., University of Michigan Law School, Ann Arbor,
Michigan

B.A., University of Michigan, Michigan

Memberships

Society for Human Resource Management, with
SHRM-SCP certification

Michigan Public Employer Labor Relations
Association

College and University Professional Association for
Human Resources

State Bar of Michigan

State Bar Licenses

Michigan

Court Admissions

U.S. District Ct., E.D. of Michigan

U.S. Court of Appeals, 6th Circuit

U.S. District Ct., W.D. of Michigan

1:30 PM – Effective Use of Outside Counsel, 10 Things You Should Know *Continued:*

Anita Galajda, Human Resources and Labor Relations Director, County of Genesee

Anita Galajda has a Masters in Negotiations and Dispute Resolution. She has been with Genesee County for 28 years, 24 of those years in the Human Resources and Labor Relations Department where she has served as the Director for 10 years.

Most of her HR experience involved labor including contract interpretation, providing guidance to personnel, supervisors, department heads and elected officials, handling grievances, negotiations, mediation, 312 and MERC hearings.

She is married to a Sergeant in the Genesee County Sheriff's Office – Yes, that makes negotiations very interesting!

They have two beagles and NO college football affiliation!

In her spare time, she enjoys settling into a comfy chair with a glass of wine and reading arbitration rulings!