

Justice

1924–2005 | served 1982–83; 1985–97

# Dorothy Comstock Riley

First woman to serve on the Michigan Court of Appeals; first Latina elected to any state supreme court in the United States

As a child Justice Dorothy Comstock Riley knew she wanted to be a lawyer. Her parents and friends believed in her, but other people doubted her because she was a woman and she was the first lawyer in her family. She worked hard to reach her dream and achieve her career goals.



**1949–68** Graduated law school but struggled to find law firms that hired women; eventually established her own firm; later became a Friend of the Court attorney and then established a law firm with her husband, Wallace D. Riley

**1972** Interim judge of Wayne County Circuit Court; returned to private practice at end of term

**1976** First woman on state Court of Appeals

**1982–83; 1985–97**  
Justice of Michigan Supreme Court; appointed Chief Justice; member of first female majority

Justice Riley's mother was a naturalized citizen from Mexico who came to the U.S. in the 1910s to study nursing.

[Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center](#) | [Biography](#) – micourthistory.org

Image: Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society