

## Michael Kirkman, J.D.

Michael Kirkman is the Executive Director of Disability Rights Ohio (DRO), a not for profit corporation charged by state and federal law with protecting and advocating for the human, civil, and legal rights of people with disabilities (P&A). He assumed that position after leading a transition to the not for profit P&A from a state agency, Ohio Legal Rights Service, where he had been the chief executive for five years and Legal Director since 1987.

Kirkman is principal co-author of OHIO MENTAL HEALTH LAW (Banks-Baldwin 2d ed. 1990), and writes and lectures frequently on legal issues affecting people with disabilities.

His work is primarily focused on expanding the role of DRO through collaborations and expanded funding. He is frequently called upon to consult on legal and governance issues affecting P&As, and has recently consulted with offices in Virginia, New York, and Indiana on questions related to creation of a not for profit P&A.

Kirkman is frequently seen at the Ohio Statehouse and, more recently, in Washington as he testifies before and consults with Ohio lawmakers on legislation that impacts people with disabilities. He is co-convenor of an Ohio work group urging ratification by the U.S. Senate of the U. N. Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, in conjunction with the National Council on Disabilities and the U.S. International Council on Disabilities. As a leading authority on mental health and guardianship laws, he serves on state bar association and Supreme Court of Ohio committees, and has a particular interest on legal standards for surrogate decision makers.

His work as a litigator focused on the community integration mandate under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and access to federal court for civil rights claims. He was trial attorney on the *Nancy Martin v. Strickland* litigation, has represented clients in the U.S. Supreme Court, and participated in dozens of cases in the U. S. Courts of Appeals and the Ohio Supreme Court. His recent practice includes friend of the court (amicus) briefs in Ohio and federal courts.

A 1980 graduate of the University of Dayton School Of Law where he was on Law Review, Kirkman subsequently served as a Reginald Heber Smith Community Lawyer Fellow through Howard University. He is admitted to practice before the courts of Nebraska and Ohio, the United States District Courts in Ohio and Nebraska, the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, and the United States Supreme Court. He enjoys spending time with his family, especially his granddaughters, and working as a professional singer with Opera/Columbus and other ensembles. He and his wife Jean Atwood, an obstetrician, live in Bexley, Ohio, and bike, golf, and cook together.