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**Hasta La Vista, Dower!**

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You may be thinking, what on earth is dower? Did he just mistype the word dowery? Nope, it is not dowery; we are not talking about a sum of money or property that a father gives to a future son-in-law when he marries the father's daughter. It is actually called "dower". It is a holdover law from long ago.

Dower was a right that a married woman had in the real estate owned by her husband. It is technically "the use during her natural life, of 1/3 part of all the lands whereof her husband was seized of an estate of inheritance, at any time during the marriage, unless she is lawfully barred thereof." It was initially instituted as a way to make sure a wife was not left destitute if her husband disinherited her and passed away. Interestingly, Michigan had no equivalent law for men. And Michigan is one of the last holdouts for dower - one of only 7 states that still have a dower right in their law.

That officially ended on April 6, 2017. This is big, big news in 3 legal areas: (1) estate planning, (2) real estate law, and (3) family law.

Many families have never heard of dower. But, even so, you may have had to take certain steps with real estate because of it. The most common dower implication was that when a married man owned property and decided to sell it, his wife still needed to sign the deed even though her name was not on it. It did not matter whether the property was purchased before or after the marriage - she had to sign in both cases. In many cases this was logistically difficult, if not annoying.

Dower was an important legal component back when Michigan had no "forced share" law for a spouse to inherit by. Based on Michigan law allowing a spouse the right to a certain amount of his/her deceased spouse's assets, it seems a good time to bid adieu to dower. This is a positive change for Michigan law and updates it in light of current inheritance law.