

# Detroit's emergency manager: Who is Kevyn Orr?

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Kevyn Orr, who was named Thursday by Michigan Governor Rick Snyder as emergency manager over the city of Detroit, is a wealthy Washington DC attorney specializing in bankruptcy law.

A native of Florida, Orr graduated from the University of Michigan law school. He will be paid \$275,000 a year for his job as financial dictator of the city of Detroit. A new state law soon to take effect will give him sweeping powers to rip up labor agreements, sell city assets and privatize services.

In accepting the appointment, he declared, "I'm prepared to be the most hated man for a period of time." Indeed, Orr's background demonstrates that he is a ruthless defender of corporate interests and a bitter enemy of working people.

Orr, who says he is a lifelong Democrat, played a role in the presidential campaigns of John Kerry and Barack Obama. He took part in the Obama administration's forced bankruptcy and restructuring of the auto industry, in which tens of thousands of jobs were eliminated, retiree health benefits slashed and new-hire pay cut by half.

Orr played a leading role in convincing the bankruptcy court to allow Chrysler to close one quarter of its US dealerships, some 800 in total. The closings cost thousands of workers their jobs and dealt a heavy blow to the economies of many small towns across the United States. For his services with Chrysler, Orr reportedly charged \$700 per hour.

Orr has been a partner in the Jones Day law firm, one of the largest law firms in the world. Among its specialties is the defense of corporations against anti-trust and product liability lawsuits. For its work on behalf of corporate malefactors, the firm was named Product Liability Group of the year in 2012. Among its clients were the RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company, which

it successfully defended against a wrongful injury and death claim.

Jones Day also defended Sherwin-Williams paint company against more than 160 personal injury suits brought over illnesses caused by lead in paint. It also fought a public nuisance claim to abate all lead paint in homes brought by 10 cities and the state of California.

Prior to his work at Chrysler, Jones helped defend Washington Group International (now Washington Division of URS Corporation) against a class action lawsuit brought by residents of New Orleans. They charged the firm was negligent in work done on the levees and flood walls of the city, which failed catastrophically during Hurricane Katrina in 2005, causing more than 1,000 deaths and untold property damage.

In another major bankruptcy case, Orr represented National Century Financial Enterprises. Lance Poulsen, former National Central Financial CEO, pleaded guilty in 2008 to defrauding customers before the collapse of the health care financing company in 2002. Poulsen and six other high-ranking executives of the firm were named in a 60-count indictment handed down by a federal grand jury in 2006.



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