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Pennsylvania Supreme Court Breaks With Tradition; Appoints First Woman, Non-Attorney to Chair Disciplinary Board

HARRISBURG, June 9, 1998 - The Pennsylvania Supreme Court has broken with tradition in two areas in selecting the new chair of its Disciplinary Board.

Chief Justice of Pennsylvania John P. Flaherty today announced that Carolyn "Raven" Rudnitsky, a Selinsgrove therapist and educator, is the first non-attorney and the first woman to head the Court's Disciplinary Board since its creation more than a quarter-century ago.

"The appointment of a person who is both a woman and a non-attorney to chair the Disciplinary Board reflects the Supreme Court's continuing efforts to broaden public participation in the administration of justice in the Commonwealth," Chief Justice Flaherty said.

Ms. Rudnitsky will serve a one-year term as chair of the Disciplinary Board, Chief Justice Flaherty said. He noted that Ms. Rudnitsky originally was appointed a member of the Disciplinary Board in 1993 and was reappointed again in 1996.

The Disciplinary Board was created by the Supreme Court in 1972 to consider and investigate the conduct of any person subject to the Pennsylvania Rules of Disciplinary Enforcement. Such people include generally any attorney admitted to practice law in Pennsylvania or any justice, judge or district justice with respect to any violation of rules committed prior to taking office, if the Judicial Conduct Board declines jurisdiction.

"The Court is pleased to have a person of Ms. Rudnitsky's ability and experience serve as chair of the Disciplinary Board," said Justice Russell M. Nigro, who serves as the Court's liaison to the Disciplinary Board. "While it is notable that Ms. Rudnitsky is the first woman non-attorney to head the Board, our emphasis is naturally focused on her professional background and qualifications and on the outstanding abilities she has displayed during her tenure as a member of the Board."

Justice Ralph J. Cappy, who originally recommended Ms. Rudnitsky for service on the Disciplinary Board, said, "Ms. Rudnitsky is to be commended for her willingness to relinquish time from her busy schedule to assist the Court's Disciplinary Board in fulfilling its mandated assignment." Justice Cappy noted that although the mother of three grown daughters is not an attorney, she has more than a passing acquaintance with the legal profession. Her husband, Marvin J. Rudnitsky, is a partner in the Selinsgrove law firm of Rudnitsky and Hackman.

Ms. Rudnitsky said she was honored that her appointment was an historic event for the Supreme Court. But, she added, "I feel that the significance of the event also reflects the fact that my contributions to the effectiveness of the Board's efforts are founded on my ability to analyze cases confronting us from a lay person's point of view, combined with the perceptions gained from my professional experience. My appointment as chair reflects the Supreme Court's commitment to insuring that lay people have input into upholding the integrity of the legal profession in the Commonwealth."

Ms. Rudnitsky was graduated Cum Laude from The Pennsylvania State University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Secondary Education and was graduated Summa Cum Laude from Bucknell University with a Master of Science Degree in Education, with a major focus on school psychology and counseling.

She presently is a partner in the Courtyard Counseling Center, where she serves as a family therapist specializing in couples and family therapy, adolescent therapy, women's issues, and stress and time management. Past experience includes service with Tressler Lutheran Service Associates as a staff member focusing on individual, couples and family therapy, and as an extended staff member and teacher and facilitator at area colleges. She also has served as a childhood/adolescent specialist on the primary prevention staff for the Columbia, Montour, Snyder, Union Counties Mental Health/Mental Retardation/Drug and Alcohol units.

Ms. Rudnitsky's leadership activities include being the founding mother of Valley Nursery School, a pre-school program which has been in existence for more than 25 years; past chair of the Professional Division of the Snyder County United Way; chair of the Youth Services committee and president of the Board of Directors of Hoffman Homes for Youth, a residential psychiatric facility for children in Gettysburg; and past council president and an active member of St. Paul's United Church of Christ.

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