

NEWS RELEASE

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Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

Gender, Racial and Ethnic Fairness Commission Continues to Move Forward on a Number of Fronts

HARRISBURG, July 13, 2005 — An intergovernmental advisory group charged with making recommendations to all three branches of state government regarding gender, racial and ethnic fairness is continuing its work to promote the equal application of the law for all of the Commonwealth's citizens.

The 24-member Interbranch Commission for Gender, Racial and Ethnic Fairness recently held its second quarterly meeting at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia under the direction of Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ralph J. Cappy, who chairs the group. In addition to its regular quarterly meetings, the chief justice announced plans to hold one public session each year to highlight group accomplishments and seek public input.

“This commission is performing a valuable service in assessing and supporting the delivery of justice for all Pennsylvanians regardless of race, gender or ethnic background,” the chief justice said. “This intergovernmental endeavor will help to advance fair and equal justice across the Commonwealth.”

Earlier this year, commission members created seven separate committees to review areas of a 550-page report issued two years ago by the Supreme Court's Committee on Racial and Gender Bias in the Justice System — a forerunner of the commission. Chairs of each committee provided an overview of their activities to date and their plans for implementation of the report recommendations.

Committee members are working on a variety of projects. They include: production of a pamphlet for victims of domestic violence that will provide a guide to obtaining court protection orders; development of a “best practices” manual on sexual harassment and equal opportunity policies for use in each of Pennsylvania's 60 judicial districts; and the production of a recruitment source manual for court appointments and employment that targets diverse groups. The committees also plan to hold periodic informational sessions with community-based organizations that work with issues under review by the commission.

The commission includes judges, attorneys, legislators and community advocates and its members are appointed by representatives from each of Pennsylvania's three branches of government.