



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

NEWS RELEASE

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Cites Collaboration to Preserve Rights, Reduce Costs, Improve Lives
Chief Justice Issues *State of the Commonwealth's Courts*

HARRISBURG, April 29, 2010 - Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ronald D. Castille today applauded the work of many, within and outside the court system, who have collaborated in the past year to “right wrongs, streamline court processes and preserve citizens’ rights.”

His comments came in the fifth annual *State of the Commonwealth's Courts* report, issued in anticipation of Law Day, May 1, 2010.

“If ever there was a time for the state and local governments in Pennsylvania to work together, as resources are limited and citizens’ needs are great, this is that time,” Castille writes in the 2010 report.

The Chief Justice outlined ways in which Pennsylvania’s court system is working to improve its administration of justice and reduce costs. Among the report’s highlights:

- The Children’s Roundtable Initiative to improve dependency programs, which help abused and neglected children to find permanent and loving homes, is both reducing the need for foster care and saving scarce funds.
- Problem-solving courts are expanding in Pennsylvania counties to include non-violent offenders who are veterans and those with mental health issues as well as their more traditional emphasis on drug and alcohol offenders. These courts are aimed at both improving offender outcomes and reducing incarceration costs.
- The number of judges at the trial and magisterial level will be assessed to determine whether shifts or decreases in caseloads suggest the need to eliminate judgeships through attrition.
- Collaborative consideration with the Legislative and Executive branches of state government and local governments is necessary to rethink the value and effects of current practices in the fields of correction, parole and probation, specifically with respect to sentencing procedures, greater use of intermediate punishment alternatives, effective treatment programs, and parole and probation violations.

(MORE)

Chief Justice Castille began this year's report by noting what he called "...the most painful issue that squarely faced the Judiciary...the filing of criminal charges leveled at two Luzerne County judges" and the injury to thousands of juvenile defendants whose constitutional rights were not adequately protected. While lauding the collaborative response by those in the community and by the three branches of state government to help redress wrongs resulting from the judges' actions, Castille also noted his keen interest in learning the "how?" and "why?" in Luzerne County that damaged the lives of the juveniles and their families alike.

Castille concluded, "My colleagues on the Supreme Court and I all share the privilege of serving Pennsylvanians by protecting our constitutional freedoms and administering an effective court system whose judges and staff are equally dedicated to those principles."

A copy of this year's *State of the Commonwealth's Courts* report may be seen at the Pennsylvania Judiciary's Web site at www.pacourts.us by clicking on the Reports button at the bottom of the page.

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