



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

## NEWS RELEASE

**CONTACT:**

**Steve Schell**, Communications Coordinator  
(717) 795-2000 ext 3269

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**[WWW.COURTS.STATE.PA.US](http://WWW.COURTS.STATE.PA.US)**

### **PA Supreme Court to Upgrade District Judge Computer System Increased Access, Internet Payments among New Features Aimed at Improving Court Efficiency**

**HARRISBURG, PA, November 19, 2007** – Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ralph J. Cappy today announced that the computer system used by more than 3,000 employees in 548 magisterial district judge courts throughout the state will be redesigned to enhance performance, flexibility and accessibility. Included in the many upgrades will be a feature allowing users to search all of Pennsylvania’s magisterial district judge, common pleas and appellate courts for criminal information on a defendant.

“Quick and easy access to the most current court information regarding prior convictions, bail history, pending charges and outstanding warrants is critical to judges, particularly when making decisions on bail for potentially dangerous defendants,” Justice Cappy said.

In addition to the search feature, Justice Cappy said, “The new system will make it easier for defendants to remit fees, fines and costs owed. Defendants will be able to pay courts costs via the Internet with a credit or debit card, thus avoiding a visit to a district court office or the nearest post office.” In 2006 magisterial district judge offices collected more than \$311 million.

Electronic filing of citations and police criminal complaints – a new feature to be piloted on the current system in late 2008 – also will be available on the redesigned Magisterial District Judge System (MDJS). E-filing is expected to significantly reduce the need of court officials to enter data into the system. For example, e-filing capabilities will allow the MDJS to directly import the traffic citation data that police log into on-board computers in police cruisers. Electronic parking tickets are already being used by some police departments within the state.

Originally developed in the early 1990s with then state-of-art technology, the MDJS was Pennsylvania’s first statewide case management system that automated all magisterial district judge offices onto one computer network and moved district judge courts toward more uniform practices and procedures. Rapid computer technological advances over the last two decades, however, have made the old system less compatible with other systems and more difficult for the Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) to maintain and modify.

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The new system will take advantage of the latest technology and the AOPC's newest software developments. Windows-based, the system will be more flexible and easier to modify as court procedures and laws change in the future. Court management will become more efficient through increased interaction between other systems used by the courts, law enforcement and executive branch agencies.

A Joint Application Development Committee has been appointed by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to assist the AOPC in new system development (*see attachment for committee members*). The committee brings together magisterial district judges, court administrators and court staff with the AOPC's business analysts and computer application developers.

"System users are actively participating in the development phase of the new system," Chief Justice Cappy said. "This should yield a new system design with a high level of efficiency and user satisfaction."

Changes recommended by users over the last several years will also be incorporated into the new system design.

The design, coding and implementation of the new system are expected to take several years. The Joint Application Development Committee, which met first in late September 2007, will continue to meet with AOPC staff through 2008. New system testing is scheduled to begin in 2009, while system rollout is slated to begin on a county-by-county basis in 2010. When the rollout is complete, approximately 26 million cases are expected to be transferred from the old to new system.

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*Editors' Note: A list of magisterial district judges and court administrators on the Joint Application Development Committee is attached.*