



NEWS RELEASE

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Pennsylvania Chief Justice Recipient of National Award for Judicial Innovation

Williamsburg, VA (Nov. 8, 2007) –Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania Ralph J. Cappy has been named the 2007 recipient of the Harry L. Carrico Award for Judicial Innovation presented by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). Chief Justice of South Carolina Jean Hoefler Toal, chair of the NCSC's Board of Directors, presented Chief Justice Cappy the award today in Philadelphia during the annual conference of the National Association of Women Judges.

Chief Justice Cappy was selected because “he has earned a reputation for being fair, thoughtful, and forward thinking,” said NCSC President Mary C. McQueen. “Chief Justice Cappy’s work in the area of improving judicial education has served as a national model. He is a leader in the court community for his contributions to making the justice system more efficient and transparent,” McQueen said.

The award is named after retired Virginia Chief Justice Harry L. Carrico, who was instrumental in founding the National Center for State Courts in 1971. Chief Justice Carrico served on the National Center’s Board of Directors from 1987 to 1990, serving as chair from 1989 - 1990. The award – created in 2003 when Chief Justice Carrico retired – was established to honor a state Supreme Court justice or chief justice who has inspired, sponsored, promoted, or led an innovation of national significance in the field of judicial administration.

All of which, Chief Justice Cappy has achieved. After being named Chief Justice of Pennsylvania in 2003, he set out to improve the fairness, efficiency, and security of the state’s courts and to make them transparent and accountable to the public. To accomplish this, Chief Justice Cappy launched several initiatives, including: co-founding the Interbranch Commission for Gender, Racial and Ethnic Fairness whose goal is to assure access and fair treatment for everyone; upgrading the quality of continuing judicial education for all judicial officers in the state; and setting qualifying standards for defense lawyers in death penalty cases in order to guarantee fair delivery of justice.

Chief Justice Cappy has a long and distinguished legal career. After graduating from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law in 1968, he became an Assistant Public Defender and later the Chief Public Defender of Allegheny County. In 1978, he became a judge of the Common Pleas Court in Allegheny County where he served in the Family, Civil, and Criminal divisions. He was appointed Administrative Judge of the Civil Division in 1986. He joined the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in 1990 and has served on the court for 18 years, the last five as Chief Justice.

The National Center for State Courts, headquartered in Williamsburg, Va., is a non-profit court reform organization dedicated to improving the administration of justice by providing leadership and service to the state courts. The National Center, founded in 1971 by the Conference of Chief Justices and Chief Justice of the United States Warren E. Burger, provides education, training, and technology, management, and research services to the nation’s state courts.

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