



# Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts

## PRESS RELEASE

May 14, 1999

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CONTACT:**

**Art Heinz, Communications and  
Legislative Affairs Coordinator (717) 795-2000**

### **Pennsylvania to Participate in National Dialogue This Weekend on Public Trust and Confidence in the Justice System**

Six Pennsylvanians will participate this weekend in the first-ever National Conference on Building Public Trust and Confidence in the Justice System — an event whose highlights will include the release of national polling about public attitudes about the courts.

The goal of the historic occasion is to create a national action plan to boost public trust and confidence by providing a sense of direction and encouragement to each state court system across the nation. About 450 people are registered for the conference on Friday and Saturday at the Renaissance Washington, D.C. Hotel. Scheduled speakers include U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and former New York Gov. Mario Cuomo.

A list of issues for discussion that are common to most states based on public surveying will be released Friday by Frank A. Bennack Jr., president and chief executive officer of The Hearst Corp., which funded the work. (*Please see the separate, attached release.*)

Pennsylvania's delegation to the conference includes:

- Phyllis W. Beck, Superior Court Senior Judge, who chairs the delegation
- Nancy M. Sobolevitch, Court Administrator of Pennsylvania
- Legrome Davis, Philadelphia Common Pleas Court judge
- Lawrence Werner, Ketchum Public Relations managing director and member of the Judicial Council of Pennsylvania
- Louis Teti, Pennsylvania Bar Association president
- Lynn Marks, Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts executive director

*(More)*

In addition to the six people attending the conference, Pennsylvania Bar Association Immediate Past President Leslie Miller also is a delegation member who has participated in discussions leading up to the event.

"Our participation in this conference is a recognition of how important it is to maintain public trust and confidence in an effective judicial system," said John P. Flaherty, chief justice of Pennsylvania. "In Pennsylvania's case, the conference will serve to build on the recent re-establishment of the Judicial Council of Pennsylvania and the ongoing work of the Pennsylvania Futures Commission on Justice in the 21st Century as indicators of the Judiciary's keen interest in this subject."

Conference planning began in May 1998 with the creation of the national advisory group to identify key issues of concern to the judiciary and proposed strategies. The broad-based coalition of business, legal and grass-roots groups interested in judicial effectiveness began developing a plan for the conference to address those concerns.

The Pennsylvania delegation has relied on some of the work already created by the Pennsylvania Futures Commission to assist with the development of a list of public trust concerns. The commission — which is chaired by Supreme Court of Pennsylvania Justice Stephen A. Zappala — is examining how to continue to have an efficient judicial system in a rapidly changing society.

The Public Trust and Confidence conference will represent the culmination of three national meetings on the judiciary and the public. The first meeting, "Bulwarks of the Republic: Judicial Independence and Accountability in the American System of Justice," was held in December in Philadelphia during a productive gathering that included more than two dozen chief justices or their designees.

Sponsors of the event include the National Center for State Courts, American Bar Association and League of Women Voters along with the Conference of Chief Justices and Conference of State Court Administrators. A subsequent conference is expected to be held next year.

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***NOTE:** If you would like to interview one of Pennsylvania's participants at the conference, please call Art Heinz at (717) 795-2000 to make arrangements.*

**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE**  
9:00 A.M., FRIDAY, MAY 14, 1999

CONTACTS: Donna Harris Mustanski  
804.343.2321  
[dmustanski@crtpr.com](mailto:dmustanski@crtpr.com)

Rand Walton  
804.343.2310  
[rwalton@crtpr.com](mailto:rwalton@crtpr.com)

## **U.S. Public Gives Report Card on Nation's Courts**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Most Americans give high marks to state and local courts for upholding the constitutional rights of defendants. The vast majority of Americans also view judges as being honest and fair in their decisions and in ensuring that litigants receive adequate legal counsel and representation.

Yet, when asked about other aspects of courts' performance, a recent opinion poll revealed that nearly 80 percent of respondents feel that court cases are not resolved in a timely manner, and about two-thirds of those polled believe that it is unaffordable to take a case to court.

These and other conclusions from the survey will be presented this Friday, May 14, by Frank A. Bennack, Jr., president and chief executive officer of The Hearst Corporation, at the first-ever National Conference on Public Trust and Confidence in the Justice System in Washington, D.C.

Bennack noted that the survey – like a similar survey funded by Hearst in 1983 – shows that there are “strengths and weaknesses in the American judicial system” and that the conference is “an important step towards addressing these issues at a national level.”

Designed by the National Center for State Courts and funded by The Hearst Corporation, the national survey polled public opinion on various aspects of state judicial systems including the performance of judges.

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The Indiana Public Opinion Laboratory at Indiana University conducted the interviews with 1,200 randomly selected adults. Samples of 300 African-Americans and 300 Hispanic-Americans also were included to ensure the findings reflected the views of all major groups in American society.

The two-day National Conference on Public Trust and Confidence in Washington, D.C., brings together state chief justices, court administrators, bar presidents and federal judges, as well as leaders from public, business and civic organizations, in a grassroots effort to bolster the public's confidence in the courts.

Keynote speakers at the conference include United States Chief Justice William Rehnquist, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and former New York Governor Mario Cuomo. The conference is sponsored by the Conference of Chief Justices, Conference of State Court Administrators, the American Bar Association and the League of Women Voters in cooperation with the National Center for State Courts.

Established in 1971, the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the administration of justice through leadership and service to the nation's state courts, including more than 16,000 trial courts. The NCSC provides information and data vital to the operations of the courts and shows how successful projects and programs in one state can assist another. State courts rely on the NCSC for research, information technology and education. The NCSC Web site is at [www.ncsc.dni.us](http://www.ncsc.dni.us).

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**NOTE:** *For complete survey findings please visit the National Center for State Courts Web site at [www.ncsc.dni.us/ptc/ptc.htm](http://www.ncsc.dni.us/ptc/ptc.htm) starting May 14, 1999, or call 800-877-1233.*

# National Conference on Public Trust and Confidence in the Justice System

Renaissance Washington, D.C. Hotel  
Washington, D.C.  
May 13-15, 1999

## Thursday, May 13, 1999

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- 3:00 - 6:00 p.m.     **Registration**  
Renaissance Foyer
- 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.     **Welcome Reception**  
Renaissance West A
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## Friday, May 14, 1999

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- 7:00 - 8:00 a.m.     **Continental Breakfast and Registration**  
Renaissance Foyer
- 8:00 - 8:10 a.m.     **Welcome**  
Renaissance East & West  
Presenters: *Hon. David A. Brock*, President, Conference of Chief Justices; *Kay Maxwell*, First Vice President, League of Women Voters of the U.S.; *Philip S. Anderson*, President, American Bar Association
- 8:10 - 8:25 a.m.     **Keynote Address**  
Introduction: *Philip S. Anderson*, President, American Bar Association  
Presenter: *Hon. William H. Rehnquist*, Chief Justice of the United States
- 8:25 - 8:30 a.m.     **Conference Overview**  
Presenters: *John J. Curtin, Jr.* and *Hon. Thomas A. Zlaket*, Co-chairs of the National Conference on Public Trust and Confidence in the Justice System
- 8:30 - 8:45 a.m.     **Overview of ABA Survey and Symposia One and Two**  
Presenter: *Philip S. Anderson*, President, American Bar Association
- 8:45 - 9:05 a.m.     **Plenary Presentation: How the Public Views the State Courts**  
*A 1999 National Survey by the National Center for State Courts, Funded by The Hearst Corporation.*  
Renaissance East & West  
Introduction: *William C. Vickrey*, President, Conference of State Court Administrators  
Presenter: *Frank A. Bennack, Jr.*, President and Chief Executive Officer, The Hearst Corporation
- 9:05 - 10:05 a.m.     **Panel Discussion: Public Perceptions of the Justice System**  
Moderator: *Catherine Crier*, Fox News' Crier Report  
Panelists: *Frank A. Bennack, Jr.*, President and Chief Executive Officer, The Hearst Corporation; *Lawrence Dark*, President and CEO of the Urban League of Portland; *Tony Mauro*, Supreme Court Correspondent for *USA Today*; *Stephen Parker*, Professor and Dean, Faculty of Law at Monash University, Victoria, Australia; *Tom Tyler*, Professor of Psychology at New York University
- 10:05 - 10:10 a.m.     Stretch Break

- 10:10 - 11:00 a.m.    **Panel Discussion: The Critical Issues**  
Renaissance East & West  
Moderator: *Charles J. Ogletree, Jr.*, Professor, Harvard Law School  
Panelists: *Beverly Watts Davis*, Executive Director, San Antonio Fighting Back;  
*Lyle Denniston*, National Correspondent, Supreme Court Reporter, *The*  
*Baltimore Sun*; *Mary T. Hernandez*, Vice President of the San Francisco  
Board of Education; *Frances Zemans*, Court Consultant
- 11:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.    **Discussion Groups: Clarifying the Critical Issues**  
**To discuss the question "Do the critical issues as identified by the state  
teams need to be reassessed in light of the morning plenary session?"**
- 12:30 - 1:45 p.m.    **Luncheon Address**  
Grand Ballroom North  
Introduction: *Hon. Judith S. Kaye*, Chief Judge, State of New York  
Presenter: *Mario M. Cuomo*, Willkie, Farr and Gallagher, Former Governor of  
New York
- 1:45 - 2:00 p.m.    Break
- 2:00 - 2:30 p.m.    **Plenary Session: Prioritizing the Issues**  
Renaissance East & West  
Facilitator: *Dan Straub*, President, Anabasis Straub & Associates
- 2:30 - 3:30 p.m.    **Panel Discussion: Potential Strategies**  
Renaissance East & West  
Moderator: *Bruce D. Collins, Esq.*, Executive Vice President and General  
Counsel, C-SPAN  
Panelists: *W. Seaborn Jones*, President-Elect, National Conference of Bar  
Presidents; *Hon. Veronica Simmons McBeth*, Presiding Judge, Los Angeles  
Municipal Court; *Lynn Hecht Schafran*, Director, National Judicial  
Education Program; *John Seigenthaler*, Founder, First Amendment Center,  
Vanderbilt University; *Diane C. Yu*, Associate General Counsel, Monsanto  
Co.
- 3:30 - 3:45 p.m.    Break
- 3:45 - 4:45 p.m.    **Discussion Groups: Clarifying Potential Strategies**  
**To discuss the question "Which of the strategies identified by the state teams  
will be most effective in addressing the high priority issues?"**
- 5:00 - 6:00 p.m.    **Plenary Session: Prioritizing Potential Strategies**  
Renaissance East & West  
Facilitator: *Dan Straub*, President, Anabasis Straub & Associates
- 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.    **Reception**  
Renaissance West

## **Saturday, May 15, 1999**

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- 7:30 - 8:30 a.m.      **Continental Breakfast**  
Renaissance Foyer
- 8:30 - 11:45 a.m.  
(20 minute break  
at 10:10 a.m.)      **Plenary Session: Formulating a National Action Plan**  
Renaissance East & West  
Facilitator: *Dan Straub*, President, Anabasis Straub & Associates  
Moderator: *Arthur Miller*, Professor, Harvard Law School
- 12:10 - 2:15 p.m.      **Luncheon Address**  
Renaissance East & West  
Introduction: *Hon. Thomas Zlaket*, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Arizona  
Presenter: *Hon. Sandra Day O'Connor*, Associate Justice, United States  
Supreme Court
- 2:15 - 2:30 p.m.      **Closing Remarks**  
Presenters: *Hon. Norman E. Veasey*, President Elect, Conference of Chief  
Justices; *Kay Maxwell*, First Vice President, League of Women Voters of the  
U.S.; *William G. Paul*, President Elect, American Bar Association

### **Post Conference Activities**

- 2:30 p.m. -      **State Team Meetings (Optional)**  
**Meeting of National Action Plan Working Group**