



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT:

Art Heinz, communications coordinator
(717) 795-2062

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Despite a “*Tidal Wave of Work*” Pennsylvania Superior Court Cited by National Center as “*Expeditious*”

HARRISBURG, April 12, 1996 — The Pennsylvania Superior Court, despite bearing one of the nation's heaviest appellate workloads, is at the top of the heap in deciding cases, according to the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), a prestigious court monitor located in Williamsburg, Va.

Announcement of the assessment was made to Pennsylvania Superior Court President Judge Stephen J. McEwen, Jr. in a letter from Roger A. Hanson, of the NCSC's Research Division.

In Pennsylvania's Unified Judicial System, the Superior Court - along with Commonwealth Court - serves as the intermediate level in the appeals process between the Common Pleas Courts and the state Supreme Court. Appeals are the vehicle by which the Superior Court of Pennsylvania supervises the trial process, correcting errors by reversing or modifying trial court decisions. Although the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania may grant a petition for an appeal from a decision of Superior Court, in the large majority of cases such petitions are denied. The Superior Court is thus the final arbiter of legal disputes in Pennsylvania in nearly all cases within its jurisdiction.

The NCSC, created in 1971, serves as a valuable resource for the nation's state courts. The National Center provides expert advice on the administration of state courts, undertakes applied research about state courts, and trains judges and administrators for leadership roles. The NCSC consults with state courts, offers technical assistance, conducts research, holds conferences, conducts training, supports education and shares information.

Hanson said in his letter to Judge McEwen, "Comparing your court with 27 randomly selected courts (e.g., New York, Texas, Colorado) from across the country, yours is one of the most expeditious courts, despite the large number of case filings per judge. In my opinion, every intermediate appellate court in the country will want to know how you have managed to achieve timeliness with one of the nation's heaviest workloads."

Judge McEwen, newly elected President Judge of the Superior Court, and a 15-year member of the court, reported that the number of appeals has risen to more than 7,000 per year, an increase of almost 100 percent in the past decade. Judge McEwen praised his colleagues -- 14 sitting judges and five senior judges -- for their dedicated diligence in disposing of what Hanson described as a "tidal wave of work."

Judge McEwen also complimented those President Judges who preceded him, as well as the Governor and the state Legislature for providing the necessary tools to accomplish the court's work.

As a result of the assessment, Judge McEwen has been invited to participate in an April 13 conference of researchers from the NCSC to explain the policies, procedures and practices that make the Pennsylvania Superior Court so productive and efficient.

Hanson, in his letter to Judge McEwen, said he wants to highlight the Pennsylvania Superior Court in a final report resulting from a research project concerning time of appeal being prepared by the NCSC.