



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

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State Supreme Court's First Televised Session to be Held at Historic Old City Hall at Independence National Historical Park to Commemorate Constitution Week

PCN will televise first-ever gavel to gavel coverage of day's arguments later that day

HARRISBURG— Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ronald D. Castille said the state Supreme Court will hold the first day of its September session in the historic Supreme Court Chamber in Old City Hall in Philadelphia's Independence National Historical Park to commemorate Constitution Week which is from Sept. 12-17, 2011.

Under an agreement announced last month with the Pennsylvania Cable Network (PCN) to allow gavel-to-gavel coverage of the Supreme Court's oral arguments, PCN intends to air the historic Independence Hall session the evening of Sept. 13, 2011, at 7 p.m.

"It seems fitting that our historic first televised session will take place in one of our nation's most historic sites – the birthplace of independence," Chief Justice Castille said. "The Pennsylvania Supreme Court sat in this very courtroom from 1790-1802.

"My colleagues and I thank Justice Seamus McCaffery who presented us with the idea of hearing arguments in Independence Hall in honor of national Constitution Week, and the Court expresses its appreciation to the National Park Service for making this historic session in Old City Hall a reality."

On Sept. 17, 1787, delegates to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia signed the U.S. Constitution, a written charter for a new—and enduring—federal government. The delegates developed a framework that would provide balance and freedom, taking into account federal and state interests, as well as individual human rights. By June 21, 1788, the Constitution had been ratified by nine of the 13 states and became effective on March 4, 1789.

The historic courtroom in Old City Hall at the corner of 5th and Chestnut streets has seats for 20 observers. Members of the public who wish to watch the proceedings will be given seats on a first-come-first-served basis. Six arguments are scheduled for the session. Arguments typically take between 20 and 30 minutes each. Observers will be required to sit for an entire argument, but may leave the courtroom during the two-minute break between cases. If observers do not intend to return, the next person on the waiting list will be allowed to take the vacant seats. The Court does not normally take a break between cases, but is doing so in this instance as a way to give more people a chance to experience this occasion.

The same rules that exist for a proceeding in the state's other three Supreme Court courtrooms will be in effect for the special session at Old City Hall. That includes the prohibition of cell phones in the courtroom and the requirement that those in the gallery are appropriately attired. Children who are of an age that can be expected to sit quietly through an argument will be permitted with an adult.

Because of the anticipated interest in the first televised proceedings the Supreme Court intends to make a satellite feed available the afternoon of Sept. 13. It will include video footage of that day's arguments in Old City Hall. Details about that satellite feed will be issued on Sept. 12.

Details of the agreement the Supreme Court reached with PCN on televised proceedings are available on its [website](#).

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Editors' Note: There will be five seats reserved for media who wish to cover this historic event. Reservations will be taken by Amy Kelchner at the number below on a first-come-first-served basis. Reporters may wish to leave at the end of an argument – six are scheduled – to make room for another member of the media. A reminder that no cell phones, cameras or recording devices are allowed in the Courtroom, as is the case with all Supreme Court proceedings. Chief Justice Castille will be available for 15 minutes following the session for brief interviews. Those should also be scheduled with Amy Kelchner.

Media contact: AOPC, [Amy Kelchner](#), 717-231-3328 (office), 717-329-9382 (cell)
PCN, [Corinna Wilson](#), 717-730-6000
Natl. Park Service, [Frank Eidmann](#), 215-597-0060

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