



# Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts

## PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Toward A 'Civil' Court

## Supreme Court of Pennsylvania Adopts Code of Civility

**HARRISBURG, December 7, 2000** — Chief Justice of Pennsylvania John P. Flaherty today announced the Pennsylvania Supreme Court has adopted a new Code of Civility for all judges and lawyers to underscore the importance of courtroom conduct in resolving cases and upholding the dignity of the legal profession.

The order reinforces the importance of preserving the longstanding practices of courtesy and civility through two sets of specific responsibilities: one for judges toward lawyers and fellow judges and, a second set, for lawyers toward the court. The new rules are expected to build on — not replace — existing standards of conduct in the Pennsylvania Rules of Court, and followed on a voluntary basis.

“The ideals of fairness, civility and justice should guide our actions,” Chief Justice Flaherty said. “It is absolutely critical for judges and lawyers to work collaboratively to ensure the successful implementation of this code to enhance the dignity of the profession of law, thus furthering public trust and confidence in the system. I would like to express appreciation to the Pennsylvania Conference of State Trial Judges for its assistance in developing these guidelines.”

Among the guiding principles set by the court:

- Lawyers and judges must conduct themselves with professional integrity and personal courtesy
- Courtesy and civility are observed as a matter of course
- Integrity and courtesy are indispensable to the practice of law and administration of justice

Judges must abide by 15 specific rules that govern a wide range of conduct — from addressing lawyers by professional title to punctual attendance and considerate scheduling of hearings and trials. Judges also are encouraged to cooperate with all other judges and treat each other with courtesy and respect.

A list of 17 rules governing lawyers' duties includes a wide range of obligations — including refraining from making unfounded accusations and personal attacks on others as well as punctual attendance at hearings

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and trials. Lawyers also are encouraged to strive to protect the judiciary from unjust criticism.

*(A copy of the order and Code are attached.)*