



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

NEWS RELEASE

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Supreme Court Asks for Progress Reports from Luzerne

HARRISBURG, March 19, 2009 - Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ronald D. Castille has asked the president judge of Luzerne County to submit monthly progress reports on improvements being made in the county court system.

The Chief Justice made the request of President Judge Chester B. Muroski who has been working to restore professional standards to the Luzerne County courts in the wake of a judicial scandal. Former President Judge Mark A. Ciavarella Jr., former Senior Judge Michael T. Conahan and former Court Administrator William T. Sharkey all have pleaded guilty to federal corruption charges in recent weeks.

"What has happened in the recent past is disheartening to all of us as jurists at every level in our Unified Judicial System," Chief Justice Castille wrote in a letter to Muroski.

Noting that "areas of progress and improvements in procedures" already have been made, Castille requested written updates on actions taken by Muroski. The reports are to be submitted to the Supreme Court monthly beginning on March 30.

"The efforts that you are taking in your judicial district could perhaps be applied to other judicial districts where there could be similar problems," Castille wrote. "By necessity, we must depend on the leadership of our President Judges, but the former situation in Luzerne County demonstrates that there may be further effective action that the Supreme Court can take to prevent such a disastrous situation from occurring in the future elsewhere."

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March 12, 2009

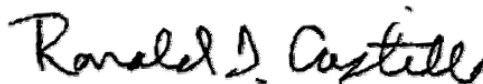
Honorable Chester B. Muroski
President Judge
Court of Common Pleas of Luzerne County
200 North River Street
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711

Dear President Judge Muroski:

The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania has been following the developments in the Luzerne County court system with interest. What has happened in the recent past is disheartening to all of us as jurists at every level in our Unified Judicial System. We have noted areas of progress and improvements in procedures designed to ameliorate some of the problems inherent in the procedures enacted by the previous administration.

The Court would like a written update of the specific actions that you have taken to address the situation in Luzerne County. We would like that report no later than March 30, 2009. Further, we would like an update on your progress every 30 days thereafter until further notice. The efforts that you are taking in your judicial district could perhaps be applied to other judicial districts where there could be similar problems. By necessity, we must depend on the leadership of our President Judges, but the former situation in Luzerne County demonstrates that there may be further effective action that the Supreme Court can take to prevent such a disastrous situation from occurring in the future elsewhere. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronald D. Castille". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

CHIEF JUSTICE RONALD D. CASTILLE

cc: All Justices
Zygmunt A. Pines, Court Administrator of Pennsylvania