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## NEWS RELEASE

**CONTACT:**

Stuart Ditzen, Assistant for Communications  
215-560-6300

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### **CASTILLE SWORN IN AS CHIEF JUSTICE Pledges a Nonpartisan, Independent and Progressive Court**

**PHILADELPHIA, PA., January 14, 2008** - Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ronald D. Castille took the oath of office today pledging that under his leadership the Supreme Court would press administrative reforms in the courts, stand firmly for judicial independence and seek the respect of citizens, litigants and lawyers for its work as a judicial body.

"Above all, I would like this court to be known as one that decides cases knowledgeably and one that decides matters that come within our purview fairly and impartially," said Castille in a speech at his swearing-in ceremony in the Supreme Court chambers in Philadelphia's City Hall.

Castille, 63, is Pennsylvania's 55th chief justice. He succeeds former Chief Justice Ralph J. Cappy who retired effective Jan. 6. Castille, a former Philadelphia district attorney, became chief justice of the seven-member court by virtue of his tenure as the court's longest-serving member. The state Constitution designates the chief justice as most senior member of the Supreme Court. Castille was first elected to the court in 1993 and was reelected in a retention election in 2003.

Among those who spoke at the swearing-in ceremony were Governor Edward G. Rendell, Attorney General Thomas W. Corbett Jr., Philadelphia Mayor Michael A. Nutter and Pennsylvania Bar Association president Andrew F. Susko.

In his speech, Castille stressed that, although members of the Supreme Court attain office through political election, the court itself is nonpartisan.

"The Supreme Court is neither a 'Democrat Court' nor a 'Republican Court,'" the chief justice said. "We are not elected to serve the parties whose banner we ran under. We are not elected to serve any particular constituency or any particular geographic region of Pennsylvania. We are simply elected to serve a higher calling: Justice."

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Continuing on this theme, Castille pledged: "We will pass upon disputes that come before us by faithfully applying the Constitution of this Commonwealth and the laws that govern our society. We will be known as a conservative court only where the law we are interpreting is conservative; we will be known as a liberal court only where the law we are interpreting is liberal; we will be known as an activist court only where justice cries out for intervention by this court."

Castille also said he would continue the reforms and programs that have been launched to improve the state court system in recent years. These include statewide judicial automation, treatment courts, interbranch governmental cooperation and funding for indigent legal services.

A former Marine lieutenant, Castille also paid tribute in his speech to his platoon sergeant, Angel Mendez, who saved his life after Castille was severely wounded in combat in Vietnam in 1967. Castille lost his right leg as a result of his wounds. Mendez himself was killed in heavy machine gun fire. Castille said an effort is underway in Congress to award Mendez the Medal of Honor.

Speaking of Mendez and the many Marine second lieutenants who were killed in Vietnam, Castille said: "To some extent, I live my life for them, and my accomplishments are their accomplishments."

The ceremonial swearing-in was conducted by former Chief Justice Cappy. In his speech, the new chief justice praised Cappy, who had served on the Supreme Court for 18 years, the past five as chief, saying his service "will long be remembered for its excellence and duly appreciated by all three branches of government and, indeed, by all the citizens of Pennsylvania."

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