



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

## Public Information Office

### King's Bench Power and Power of Extraordinary Jurisdiction

Can the Supreme Court hear any case it chooses?

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court has the power to take control of any case pending in a lower court and even some matters not pending in the courts when it sees the need to address an issue of “immediate public importance.”

When it does so, the Supreme Court exercises its "King's Bench power" or its power of “extraordinary jurisdiction” as provided by the Pennsylvania Constitution and Pennsylvania law.

Although King's Bench power, which is based on English common law, is similar in many respects to extraordinary jurisdiction, the two powers are not identical. Extraordinary jurisdiction enables the Supreme Court to assume jurisdiction of any matter pending before a lower court at any stage. King's Bench power may be exercised when no matter is pending -- for example, if an issue of importance arises in connection with the Supreme Court's administrative authority over the lower courts.

The Supreme Court exercises these powers only on rare occasions. It has exercised them to take jurisdiction of cases involving election disputes, public employee strikes, prison overcrowding, investigating grand juries, powers of the Legislature and alleged judicial misconduct.