



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

NEWS RELEASE

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Interbranch Commission for Gender, Racial and Ethnic Fairness to Hold Seminars on Jury Diversity and Participation

HARRISBURG, November 22, 2005 — An advisory body to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania will be holding a series of seminars across the Commonwealth to promote public participation and ethnic, gender and racial diversity on juries.

The Interbranch Commission for Gender, Racial and Ethnic Fairness held the first of its five regional jury seminars earlier this month in Pittsburgh. Using a “town meeting” format, the seminar generated input from court administrators, jury commissioners, judges, legislators and NAACP representatives who have been actively working with the courts on these issues. Similar seminars will be held at urban, suburban and rural sites to be announced around the state and will be devoted to investigating methods of increasing diversity and public participation on juries. Topics to be covered will include juror pay, child care, interpreter services, jury pool sources and transportation.

“The Interbranch Commission continues to do a commendable job in laying the foundation for identifying systematic strengths and areas in need of further study,” Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ralph J. Cappy said. “These seminars should cultivate productive dialogue with participants who are deeply committed to enhancing the participation and diversity of one of our most important civic duties — serving on a jury. The knowledge, experience and enthusiasm for the job that these commission members bring to this task will energize the development of innovative solutions to challenges faced by the current jury system.”

The first seminar featured presentations from Ray Billotte, Allegheny County Court Administrator, Erie County Judge Stephanie Domitrovich and Tom Munsterman, a highly-regarded expert on jury issues from the National Center for State Courts. It was followed by an extensive question-and-answer session in which participants commented upon personal experience with these issues and asked questions of the panel members. The session was moderated by professor Sandra Jordan of the University of Pittsburgh School of Law.

The goal of the regional seminars is to provide the Commonwealth’s judicial districts with an opportunity to discuss efforts to increase diversity and public participation on juries and to share information on methods that have proven to be effective in achieving that goal.

The Interbranch Commission’s 24 members were appointed by the state’s three government branches and drawn from around the state to act as an advisory body to the Supreme Court. Members include judges, attorneys, legislators and community advocates. The commission convenes quarterly.

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