



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HARRISBURG, Sept. 11, 2007 — Please find attached a statement issued today by Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ralph J. Cappy and the text of an accompanying letter from the chief justice to Gov. Ed Rendell. Additional attachments include a photo and the chief justice's biography.

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September 10, 2007

The Honorable Edward G. Rendell
Governor of the Commonwealth
225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Rendell,

I write to inform you of my decision to retire and resign my Commission as Justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, effective midnight, December 31, 2007.

On the day of my retirement, I will have served as a Judge in Pennsylvania for 29½ years. For the past 18 years I have been a Justice of the Supreme Court, and for the last five years I have served as Chief Justice. This opportunity for public service has been the single greatest privilege of my life and I am deeply grateful to the people of Pennsylvania.

For me the time has come to move on. I am very proud of the record this Court has made during my terms of service. We will pass on a modernized, strong, independent and effective co-equal third branch of government to our successors.

I am informing you of my decision now so that we can plan and execute an orderly transition on the Court. During my years here, I have served with fifteen Justices and I can personally attest that Senior Justice Castille, who will succeed me as Chief Justice, is the equal of any. He is more than ready to be the leader of this court and I am certain he will excel as Chief Justice.

In the 3½ months remaining in my service, Justice Castille and I will work together - along with our colleagues - to implement a smooth transition.

The Honorable Edward G. Rendell
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Let me close by thanking you personally for your unwavering support for an independent and professional judiciary. It has been an honor to work with you.

Sincerely,

Ralph J. Cappy
Chief Justice of Pennsylvania

Statement by Pennsylvania Chief Justice Ralph J. Cappy

September 11, 2007

After serving for nearly 30 years as a member of the Pennsylvania judiciary, I have notified Governor Rendell of my decision to retire and resign as a Justice of the Supreme Court at the end of 2007.

It is a decision made for personal reasons and after thoughtful consideration. As I said in my letter to the Governor, I am proud of the Supreme Court's record during the five years I have served as Chief Justice. We have modernized. We have developed new programs to better serve people who use the courts. We have worked to address the needs of families, women and minorities in the courts. We have improved courthouse security. And we have set in motion initiatives designed to ensure other improvements as the years go on.

But for me, after years of an extremely busy work schedule, I believe it is time to go. I had a hip replaced in July. During the period of recovery I had time for reflection. I realized that, after nearly three decades on the bench, the time had come for me to pass on the torch. I am 64 years old. My health is still good. But I want to spend more time with my family and to pursue personal interests.

I will continue to serve as chairperson of the board of trustees of the University of Pittsburgh and as vice chairperson of the board of directors of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, but otherwise, I intend to cut back on my public commitments.

Pennsylvanians may ask if the controversy over judicial compensation played any part in my decision to retire. Let me be clear: The fact is that the controversy played no part in this decision.

I accepted the job of Chief Justice knowing that I alone would have the task of speaking for the entire Judicial Branch of government in Pennsylvania. I have tried to do that forthrightly on the subject of judicial compensation and on every issue involving judicial administration. My position on compensation for judges has not changed in thirty years.

In a nutshell, I have always known that for our governmental system to work as designed, the judiciary must be fully co-equal with the other branches of government. Yet, without an army or the power of the purse, the judiciary is the weakest of the three branches, and thus must depend on the quality of the people who serve it for its strength and independence.

My view has always been that while we cannot hope to have judicial salaries that compete with the private sector, we must have salaries high enough to attract and retain outstanding people as judges. I fully expected any practical effort to address the compensation issue to be controversial. Even so, I believe the effort was in the public interest and that improved compensation for our judges will pay dividends long into the future by continuing to give Pennsylvanians a strong and independent judiciary.

The judiciary is an institution to which I have devoted most of my adult life, first as a Common Pleas Court judge in Allegheny County and later as a Supreme Court justice. I am proud of Pennsylvania's Unified Judicial System and all that we have accomplished within the courts. Although I will leave judicial service at the end of this year, I will always remain committed to the principles of judicial independence and judicial excellence. As importantly, I will always treasure the honor of having worked with so many fine colleagues who devote themselves to these principles.

CHIEF JUSTICE RALPH J. CAPPY
SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA

Chief Justice Cappy is now serving his second ten-year term on the Pennsylvania Supreme Court having begun his service on January 1, 1990. In July of 1979, the Chief, after a merit selection process, was appointed as a trial judge to the Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania where he served until his elevation to the Supreme Court. During his tenure as a trial judge, he served in the Family, Criminal and Civil divisions of the court and was appointed by the Supreme Court as administrative judge of the Civil Division 1986-90.

Chief Justice Cappy is a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh (B.S., 1965) and its Law School, (J.D., 1968). He served as a law clerk to the president judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County from 1968-70 after which he entered the general practice of law. Chief Justice Cappy also served as an Allegheny County public defender being elevated to the chief public defender 1975-78.

Chief Justice Cappy has lectured for the Allegheny County and Pennsylvania Bar Associations and the Pennsylvania Bar Institute in various educational programs. He also has taught constitutional law at the University of Pittsburgh and served as an instructor of constitutional law and trial tactics for the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County Police academies.

Chief Justice Cappy was admitted to the bar of the Supreme Court of the United States in 1975 and is presently a member of the Allegheny County, Pennsylvania and American Bar Associations as well as the American Judicature Society and the Justinian Society. He was elected a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation and Allegheny Bar Foundation in 1996.

Chief Justice Cappy is proud of his service to the Pennsylvania Conference of State Trial Judges (1978-90) where he chaired numerous committees and was elected to the chairs of the conference serving as treasurer and secretary before his elevation to the Supreme Court.

The Chief Justice chairs the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania Judicial Council and chaired the Statewide Unification Committee.

Chief Justice Cappy is a member of the Conference of Chief Justices where he has served on the Board of Directors and has chaired the Mass Tort Litigation Committee. He has served on the Civil Justice, Government Affairs, Security and Emergency Preparedness, Access to Justice and Fairness in the Courts and the Mid-Atlantic Committees.

Additionally, the Chief Justice has been appointed to the United States Judicial Conference Committee on Federal-State Jurisdiction by the United States Supreme Court Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist.

The Chief Justice presently serves as chairperson on the Board of Trustees of the University of Pittsburgh. He also serves on the Board of Visitors of the University of Pittsburgh School of Law. Additionally, Chief Justice Cappy serves as Vice Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center Health Systems.

Chief Justice Cappy has received many awards and citations among which are an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Widener University; Distinguished Alumnus Award from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law; the Distinguished Laureate Alumni Award, University of Pittsburgh; Citation of Merit by Mothers Against Drunk Driving; Man of the Year Pennsylvania State Police; Man of the Year Pennsylvania Fraternal Order of Police; Pennsylvania Bar Association Judicial Award; Gold Medal for Distinguished Service Award, Order of Sons of Italy, Grand Judge of Pennsylvania; Man of the Year, Sons of Italy; Man of the Year, Italian Heritage Foundation; rated exceptionally well qualified for service on the Supreme Court by Judiciary Committee, Pennsylvania and Allegheny County Bar Associations; and Academy of Trial Lawyers; Italian American Man of the Year (Pittsburgh Italian Scholarship Fund).

Chief Justice Cappy has been selected to receive the Harry Carrico Award by the National Center for State Courts, Williamsburg, Virginia. The award is periodically given to a Chief Justice who has inspired, sponsored, promoted or led innovations of national significance in the field of judicial administration. The awardee must have demonstrated integrity, fairness, open-mindedness, knowledge of the law, professional ethics, creativity, sound judgment, intellectual courage and decisiveness in judicial rulings while providing leadership at the national and/or state level to improve state systems of justice. The Chief Justice will receive the award in November 2007.