



Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pennsylvania Supreme Court Appoints Cooper to Committee on Racial and Gender Bias

HARRISBURG, December 3, 2001 — The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania today announced the appointment of Thomas L. Cooper, of Allegheny County, to the Committee on Racial and Gender Bias in the Justice System.

The Committee on Racial and Gender Bias in the Justice System was appointed by order of the Supreme Court on October 14, 1999. The committee is conducting a comprehensive review of whether the manner in which participants are treated in the state court system varies on the basis of race, ethnicity or gender. After completing the study, the committee will present its findings and any recommendations to the Supreme Court.

Chaired by Duquesne University Law School Professor and Dean, Nicholas P. Cafardi, the committee is made up of distinguished representatives from across the state, including members of the bench and bar, educators and citizen activists. Its 10 members each serve three-year terms.

The committee is assisted by many other members of the Pennsylvania legal community who serve on subcommittees, collecting data on a discrete set of topics of study chosen by the committee. Those topics include the jury selection process, racial disparities in sentencing, barriers to participation in the courts by non-English speaking and pro se litigants, the court appointment process, the juvenile justice system, the adequacy of representation by the county public defender system, racial disparities in the imposition of the death penalty and the calculation of damages in tort cases.

The committee also has conducted a series of six public hearings around the state. Data from the hearings will be incorporated into the committee's final report. Inquiries about the committee's study can be made to Executive Director Lisette M. McCormick, Esq. at (412) 396-6288 or via e-mail at: mccormickm@duq.edu.