



Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cappy urges "investment in future"

Collective decision-making key to proposed judicial budget

HARRISBURG, March 2 — The Honorable Ralph J. Cappy, justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, today urged members of the General Assembly to look at the proposed 1999-2000 budget of the Judiciary as an important investment in the future.

Cappy's remarks before the House Appropriations Committee outlined traditional spending requests for the appellate, trial and minor courts and underscored the need for the General Assembly to approve legislation to move county court administrators and their deputies to the state-funded judicial system. Cappy spoke about the need to continue the momentum generated by the \$17 million that Governor Tom Ridge's budget proposal sets aside for the transition, and cited the investment as an example of how collective government decision-making enhances the Judiciary's ability to serve all Pennsylvanians.

"It will enable us to both meet our current responsibilities in the Commonwealth and build upon our past successes to meet our responsibilities in the 21st century," Cappy said of the Judiciary's financial plan. "In the immediate months ahead, our foremost priority continues to be the orderly transition to a state-funded judicial system, which can respond more effectively to the anticipated needs of the next century."

He also noted recent Judiciary accomplishments and talked about the need to continue developing and implementing new technology.

While embracing new technology, the Judiciary also has broadened its accountability by doing such things as re-establishing the Judicial Council of Pennsylvania and expanding the availability of information through the Internet, Cappy said. Governor Ridge also has recommended funding for the Judiciary's longstanding interest for a study of the effects that gender, racial and ethnic bias may have in achieving equitable decisions, Justice Cappy added.

(OVER)

"Superior Court has been honored as the fifth most expeditious intermediate appellate forum in the nation while Commonwealth Court has maintained consistently high productivity in light of ever-increasing caseloads," Cappy told the committee. "With the adoption of internal operating procedures and a serious commitment by my colleagues and myself, I can also report that the Supreme Court is essentially current in our caseload."

Cappy also noted how a delegation from Pennsylvania will participate in a national conference in May in Washington, D.C. to further address issues that may diminish citizen confidence in the courts. The goal of the conference is to create a national action plan to mobilize organizations to promote public trust and confidence in the justice system.

Pennsylvania's Judiciary includes nearly 1,600 employees, consisting of the Supreme, Superior and Commonwealth courts; Common Pleas Courts; Philadelphia Municipal Court; Philadelphia Traffic Court; Pittsburgh Magistrates Court and district justice courts. Established in 1722, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania is the nation's oldest court.

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