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Courts Make Contingency Plans for Election Day

HARRISBURG, October 28, 2008 – Pennsylvania courts are preparing, both at the county level and at the appellate level, to deal with any unusual volume of litigation that might result from next Tuesday's election.

"We do not necessarily anticipate anything unusual," said Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ronald D. Castille. "We are merely taking precautionary steps, as we always do prior to an election, so that our courts are prepared in the event that a need arises."

Chief Justice Castille has issued a memorandum to Common Pleas Court president judges in all 60 judicial districts in Pennsylvania noting that the record number of newly registered voters around the Commonwealth "may impose additional burdens on the courts during the upcoming presidential election."

The chief justice said it was essential for the courts to be open and accessible on Election Day to hear all election-related disputes.

Commonwealth Court President Judge Bonnie Brigance Leadbetter said her court is prepared to promptly handle all election-related appeals as well as any election cases that may be filed directly with Commonwealth Court. If necessary, the Supreme Court also is prepared to hear election appeals.

In the event of a mandatory vote recount or other election contest involving the presidential race in Pennsylvania, the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) is prepared to create a special Web site where all petitions, pleadings, court opinions and court orders would be posted. Under Pennsylvania law, a mandatory recount is required when a candidate on the statewide ballot is defeated by a vote margin of one-half of one percent or less.

Court leaders and the AOPC are working with the Pennsylvania Department of State this year, as in years past, to coordinate efforts to address and resolve any problems that may occur on Election Day or in its aftermath.

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