



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

NEWS RELEASE

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Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

Gender, Racial and Ethnic Fairness Commission to Provide Collaborative Forum for Variety of Issues

HARRISBURG, March 4, 2005 — Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ralph J. Cappy today announced the formation of a 24-member Interbranch Commission for Gender, Racial and Ethnic Fairness to promote the equal application of the law for all citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

“By collaboratively reviewing and developing initiatives, this intergovernmental commission will provide a unique forum to address issues of concern to many Pennsylvanians,” the chief justice said. “It will enhance the trust and confidence of Pennsylvania’s citizens in the Judiciary through its work to ensure everyone is getting fair justice no matter their race, gender or ethnic background.”

The commission’s 24 members were appointed by the state’s three government branches and were drawn from around the state. The members include judges, attorneys, legislators and community advocates. The commission, which met today for the first time, is scheduled to convene quarterly.

Attorney Lisette McCormick was appointed executive director of the commission. McCormick previously served as executive director of the Supreme Court’s Committee on Racial and Gender Bias in the Justice System — a forerunner of the commission.

The commission will rely on the considerable research already done by the committee as a basis for its work. The committee outlined its findings in a 550-page final report that was released in 2003. (*A copy of the report can be found on the Pennsylvania Judiciary Web site at: www.courts.state.pa.us*) The commission is expected to review and select recommendations from the final report and suggest possible means of implementation, in addition to examining any new initiatives.

Funding for the establishment of the commission was approved last year by the General Assembly and contained in the Fiscal Year 2004-2005 judiciary budget.

Appointment of a chair, vice chair and secretary will rotate among the three branches with the Chief Justice of Pennsylvania serving as chair in the first year. Similarly, the terms of the vice chair and secretary also will be one year in the first year of operation. Thereafter, all officers will serve two-year terms. Succeeding chairs will be appointed by the governor, legislature and judiciary.

(A list of commission members is attached.)

Cathy Bissoon, Esq.
Pittsburgh

Judge Ida K. Chen
Philadelphia Common Pleas Court

Pedro Cortes
Secretary of the Commonwealth

Khadija T. Diggs
Pittsburgh

Michael P. Edmiston, Esq.
Harrisburg

Lazar H. Kleit
Philadelphia

Judge Maureen E. Lally-Green
Superior Court

Lynn Marks, Esq.
Philadelphia

Leslie Anne Miller, Esq.
Governor's General Counsel

Burton D. Morris, Esq.
Harrisburg

Sen. Mary Jo White
Pennsylvania Senate

Jennifer Ann Wise, Esq.
Scotrun, Lackawanna County

Burrell Brown, Esq.
Clairton, Allegheny County

Samuel Tyrone Cooper III, Esq.
Harrisburg

Jacqueline D'Angelo, Esq.
Philadelphia

Judge Elizabeth Doyle
Blair County Common Pleas Court

Judge Renee Cohn Jubelirer
Commonwealth Court

Ted V. Kondrich
Pittsburgh

Roberta D. Liebenberg, Esq.
Philadelphia

Lucille Marsh, Esq.
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Gladys Miller-Russell
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