



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT:

[Art Heinz](#), Communications Coordinator
717-231-3317

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

www.pacourts.us

Supreme Court Creates Conduct Code for Court Employees

HARRISBURG, Oct. 4, 2010 - The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania has adopted a comprehensive Code of Conduct that applies to approximately 15,000 state-level and county-level court employees.

Among its provisions, the Code of Conduct bars court employees from using their positions for personal gain, from soliciting or accepting additional compensation beyond their salaries for the performance of their duties, from doing special favors, or from misusing court resources, supplies or equipment to benefit themselves or others.

"Many of these rules are fundamental to a good faith relationship between the judiciary and its employees and the citizens of Pennsylvania," said Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ronald D. Castille. "Our employees traditionally have been held to high standards and they have lived up to them for the most part. Adopting a formal Code of Conduct is a best practice that will help the courts maintain and strengthen those standards."

Zygmunt A. Pines, Court Administrator of Pennsylvania, said the Code of Conduct is the product of two years of research and review by the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC). Pines said the AOPC studied conduct codes of 26 state judicial systems and the federal courts.

"Public service imposes special obligations," said Pines. "This Code of Conduct for employees is a road map that will provide immeasurable guidance for all of us as we strive to serve the public honorably."

The Code of Conduct, which took effect October 1, covers all employees of the Unified Judicial System, including all state-level court employees and all county-level employees who are under the supervision of the president judge in each judicial district, such as employees in judges' chambers, in court administration and other court-related offices.

-more-

The Code of Conduct requires court employees to safeguard confidential information acquired in the course of their work and bars them from disclosing confidential information for any but an official purpose.

The code also prohibits court employees from engaging in partisan political activity as set forth in guidelines issued by the Supreme Court in an order on November 24, 1998 (and originally adopted in 1987).

The code lists 14 points of workplace conduct for employees including requirements that they work diligently, treat others with respect and impartiality, avoid impropriety and refrain from discrimination, harassment or retaliation against others.

The code requires employees to report to their immediate supervisors any attempt by anyone to induce them to violate any provision of the code. It also mandates that employees must disclose to their supervisors if they have been arrested, charged with or convicted of a crime - other than a summary traffic offense - in any jurisdiction.

The code specifically references Pennsylvania's whistle blower statute which protects employees from retaliation for reporting wrongdoing. Chief Justice Castille noted that employees should be aware that they can report wrongdoing, even by a president judge as happened in Luzerne County, without retaliation.

Adoption of the code by the Supreme Court follows its 2008 adoption of a system-wide policy on non-discrimination and equal employment opportunity.

The employee Code of Conduct and other court policies are posted on the Web site of the Unified Judicial System at the following link:

<http://www.pacourts.us/Links/Judiciary/>

###