



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

News for Immediate Release

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Senior judge to assist Washington County court administration

HARRISBURG — Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ronald D. Castille announced today that Senior Judge Joseph M. James, a former administrative judge and president judge of Allegheny County, has been appointed by the Supreme Court as interim administrative judge of Washington County.

Washington County President Judge Debbie O’Dell Seneca will continue to serve as president judge and carry a full caseload while Judge James will be responsible for all administrative and operational matters in the 27th Judicial District. Judge James is not anticipated to hear cases in Washington County. His assignment begins on Nov. 5, 2014, and will be for an indefinite tenure.

“New perspective, renewed collegiality and greater collaboration are values that often result when administrative leadership in a judicial district changes,” Chief Justice Castille said. “Judge James’ appointment is an opportunity to strengthen the Washington County bench in light of challenges the court system has experienced in recent years, including judicial vacancies and time-consuming, complex litigation.”

In praising President Judge O’Dell-Seneca for her dedicated work over the past 10 years as president judge, the chief justice noted that those who serve as president or administrative judges in some larger counties typically are limited to five-year terms in those roles.

President Judge O’Dell-Seneca reacted enthusiastically.

“I have known Judge James as a colleague and friend for many years,” she said. “His significant experience will be of great assistance in Washington County and I look forward to working with him.”

Following is a biography of Senior Judge James:

Judge Joseph M. James is a 1970 graduate of the University of Pittsburgh and a 1973 graduate of the University Of Pittsburgh School of Law. Judge James was nominated for judge to the

Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas by former Gov. Robert P. Casey, confirmed by the state senate in 1987 and elected to a full term that year. He was retained in 1997 and again in 2007. Judge James was initially assigned to the criminal division and in 1992 moved to the civil division. Judge James served as the administrative judge of the civil division from 2000 to 2003 when he was elected president judge. He served the five-year term as president judge from 2003 to 2008.

Judge James is a former member of the Judicial Inquiry and Review Board, the Executive Board of the Pennsylvania Conference of State Trial Judges and State Trial Judges' Ethics Advisory Board and as a judge of the Court of Judicial Discipline. He is an adjunct professor at the Duquesne University School of Law. Judge James retired in July 2013 and became a senior judge assigned to Allegheny County's Civil Division.

Link to the order: <http://www.pacourts.us/assets/opinions/Supreme/out/434jad.pdf?cb=1>

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