



Established by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in 2005, the Commission on Judicial Independence (PACJI) was charged, among its tasks, to foster greater understanding by the public about the role of the judiciary, explain the value of an independent judiciary in America, and illuminate unjust criticism of the judicial system. Since then, the Commission has created educational programs and seminars for the public and other, often in collaboration with other sponsors.

Members of the Commission

Justice James J. Fitzgerald III *Co-chair, Senior Judge Pennsylvania Superior Court*

Judge John E. Jones III *Co-chair, U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania*

Andrew F. Susko, Esq. *White and Williams LLP*

Edward W. "Ned" Madeira Jr., Esq. *Pepper Hamilton LLP*

Judge D. Michael Fisher *U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit*

Charisse R. Lillie, Esq. *Vice President for Community Investment, Comcast*

William M. Carter Jr., Esq. *Dean and Professor of Law, University of Pittsburgh School of Law*

Judge Christylee Peck *Cumberland County Court of Common Pleas*

Charles L. Becker, Esq. *Kline & Specter, P.C.*

Darren M. Breslin, Esq. *Counsel*

Past PACJI members

Justice Cynthia Baldwin (ret.)

Honorable Edward R. Becker

Professor John M. Burkoff

Chief Justice Emeritus John P. Flaherty

Professor Geoffrey C. Hazard, Jr.

Renardo L. Hicks, Esq.

Honorable Renee Cardwell Hughes

Honorable Lisa P. Lenihan

Honorable Stephen A. McEwen, Jr.

Jane G. Penny, Esq.

J. Evans Rose, Esq.

Summary of Significant Commission Activities 2005-2014

Ongoing

Collaboration with groups such as PA Forward, PennCord, the Pennsylvania Bar Association, the Philadelphia Bar Association, Dickinson College, Dickinson School of Law, Duquesne University Law School and the National Constitution Center.

Summer 2006

Coordinated presentation on judicial independence issues by Bert Brandenburg, executive director of the public interest group "Justice at Stake" for the Pennsylvania Conference of State Trial Judges.

2009

Created and sponsored with Dickinson College's Clarke Forum for Contemporary Issues a Court/Media Program featuring distinguished Pennsylvania journalists and judges in a forum moderated by John Curley, professor and Distinguished Professional in Residence at Penn State University.

2009

Assisted the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts in the development of a DVD and companion brochure, "A Citizen's Guide to Pennsylvania's Unified Judicial System," and facilitated their distribution to schools, libraries and others interested state-wide.

March, 2007

Facilitated lectures, subsequently published by the Duquesne Law Review, on merit-retention by Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Thomas G. Saylor and PACJI Counsel Darren Breslin for the inaugural Matthew J. Ryan Law and Public Policy Forum at the National Constitution Center.

2006-2008

Sponsored regional workshops with the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association and the Pennsylvania Association of Broadcasters for journalists and judges designed to foster understanding of their respective roles and practices.

2013 and ongoing

Collaboration with PAFoward, an enterprise of the Pennsylvania Library Association designed to promote greater public literacy in various areas, including civics, through creation and distribution of information by and development of programs at Pennsylvania's public libraries.

2008-2012

Created with the Pennsylvania Bar Association and PennCord, Teacher Institutes on the Judiciary in Harrisburg, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Scranton, and Clarion. The day-long programs for secondary school teachers -- often presented in tandem with law schools or public school intermediate units -- were designed to encourage a greater emphasis on civics education and to foster a better understanding of the role of the judiciary.

September, 2007

Sponsored day-long activities and a speech in Harrisburg by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor (ret.) regarding the importance of an independent judiciary and unjust criticism of judges.

November, 2014

Created in collaboration with author Joel Cohen and the National Constitution Center a panel discussion, "Blindfolds Off -- Judges on How they Decide... In An Era of Discontent," at the National Constitution Center.

2011

Created and co-sponsored with Dickinson College's Clarke Forum for Contemporary Issues and The Dickinson School of Law of The Pennsylvania State University "Justice Unfunded / Justice Undone," a program on court resource issues moderated by former Pennsylvania Governor Dick Thornburgh featuring senior officials of the National Center for State Courts, the National Governor's Association, Pennsylvania Senate Majority Leader Dominic Pileggi, Pennsylvania Budget Secretary Charles Zogby and state Supreme Court Justice Debra Todd.