

Infographic for Immediate Release

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How the Pennsylvania Supreme Court Operates

HARRISBURG—The Pennsylvania Supreme Court is the highest court in the Commonwealth and the oldest appellate court in North America. Justices serve 10-year terms, up to age 75 – and they receive and review over 2,000 requests for review annually.

How does a case get to the Supreme Court? What happens once the Supreme Court selects a case review? What are a few of the court’s administrative duties? This month’s infographic provides a high-level overview of the Supreme Court. A high-resolution file of the graphic is available for download at www.pacourts.us under [Media Resources](#).

How the Pennsylvania Supreme Court Operates

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Bottom row: Justice Max Baer, Chief Justice Tom Saylor, Justice Debra McCloskey Todd
Top row: Justice David Wecht, Justice Christine Donohue, Justice Kevin Dougherty, Justice Sallie Updyke Mundy

About PA's Justices:

- There are seven Justices – including a Chief Justice
- Justices serve 10-year terms, up to age 75
- The Justice with the longest continuous service on the court automatically becomes Chief Justice.

The PA Supreme Court:

- It is the highest court in the Commonwealth
- The court meets in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Harrisburg
- Dating back to **1684** it's the oldest appellate court in North America
- Receives and considers over **2,000** requests for review annually

How a case gets to PA's Supreme Court:

1. Primarily hears appeals from Commonwealth and Superior Courts, but also hears direct appeals such as death penalty cases
2. Can consider any case pending in a lower court of "immediate public importance"
3. At its own discretion, the court will grant an appeal upon approval of three justices.

What happens once a case is selected for review?

1. **Parties make arguments:** Justices review briefs and usually hear oral arguments
2. **Justices write opinions:**
 - Majority opinion: shared by more than half of court and becomes the court's decision
 - Dissenting opinions: opinions that disagree with the disposition of the case
 - Concurring opinions: agree with result but not necessarily the rationale
3. **Court issues decision:** The court hands down a decision within defined timelines after the oral argument (or submission of a case).

What are a few of the court's administrative duties?

- Supervise the entire Pennsylvania Unified Judicial System
- Make procedural rules for administration of justice in the courts
- Regulate the practice of law, including admission to the bar and attorney discipline.

Learn more at <http://www.pacourts.us/learn> **AOPC**

PA Courts InfoShare visually highlights the work of Pennsylvania courts with interesting data and statistics obtained through the judiciary’s case management systems, interactive dashboards and other research. The Administrative Office of

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