NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Announces Passing of Former Chief Justice Ronald D. Castille

HARRISBURG – The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania is mourning the loss of former Chief Justice Ronald D. Castille, who died on November 4, 2026. He was 82 years old.

Chief Justice Debra Todd offered the following statement:

"I am deeply saddened by the passing of former Chief Justice Ron Castille, whose life was defined by an extraordinary commitment to service, duty and the pursuit of justice. His contributions to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania and to the citizens of this Commonwealth leave a lasting mark on our Commonwealth.

Chief Justice Castille's life was defined by service. Upon graduating from Auburn University in 1966 with a Bachelor of Science degree in economics, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps. He served as a rifle platoon commander with Company F, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division in Vietnam. On March 16, 1967—his 23rd birthday—while leading a search-and-destroy mission near Đức Phổ in Quảng Ngãi Province, his unit came under attack by a Viet Cong battalion. Lieutenant Castille was severely wounded by enemy gunfire. He was rescued by his platoon Sergeant, Angel Mendez, who himself was mortally wounded in the rescue.

Ron Castille lost his right leg as a result of his injuries and was medically retired from the Marine Corps in 1968. For his valor he received the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V," two Purple Hearts, and other distinctions. Thereafter, he walked with crutches for the remainder of his life, yet he remained an avid golfer, downhill skier and boater.

He often remarked that he lived his life in honor of Angel Mendez and others with whom he served who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Following a lengthy period of convalescence at the Philadelphia Naval Hospital, he earned his Juris Doctor degree from the University of Virginia School of Law in 1971. That same year he joined the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office under District Attorney Arlen Specter. Over the next fourteen years he served as an assistant and then deputy district attorney, rising to leadership roles that

included chief of the Career Criminal Unit. He tried numerous cases and developed a reputation as a skilled and determined prosecutor.

In 1985 he was elected District Attorney of Philadelphia. He served from 1986 until 1991, twice elected by the voters. As District Attorney he oversaw an office of more than 200 attorneys handling tens of thousands of criminal cases annually. He emphasized vigorous prosecution of violent crime, led major investigations involving organized crime, drug trafficking, and public corruption, and worked to improve the efficiency of the city's criminal justice system. While District Attorney, he spearheaded the development of the Philadelphia Vietnam Veterans Memorial. He left the office in 1991 and entered private practice with the firm of Reed Smith Shaw & McClay after an unsuccessful run for Mayor of Philadelphia.

In 1993 he was elected a Justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. He took office in January 1994 and was retained by the voters in 2003 and 2013. On January 14, 2008, he was sworn in as Chief Justice of Pennsylvania, the 55th Chief Justice in Pennsylvania history, serving in that capacity until his mandatory retirement at age 70 on December 31, 2014.

Chief Justice Castille left a substantial judicial legacy, authoring more than four hundred majority opinions touching upon virtually every area of law. He authored seminal opinions in the areas of court funding, judicial independence, torts, criminal law, education, labor relations, zoning, taxation, workers compensation, insurance, oil and gas, judicial conduct, and attorney discipline. He was particularly influential in developing law under the Pennsylvania Constitution, authoring important cases involving freedom of expression, the Environmental Rights Amendment, reapportionment and redistricting, criminal procedure, excessive fines, and the separation of powers.

On the administrative side, Chief Justice Castille shepherded the courts through difficult economic times, ensuring that no court in Pennsylvania closed for a single day during periods of budgetary shortfalls. He prioritized the reduction of civil case backlogs; led efforts toward juvenile justice reform; spearheaded implementation of stronger judicial conduct codes; implemented measures to fast-track family law matters; and led many initiatives to improve the First Judicial District in Philadelphia. He also was an unwavering advocate for access to justice, supporting civil legal aid programs for the indigent and pro bono legal assistance.

In light of the special needs of our elder Pennsylvanians, in 2013 the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, at the direction of Chief Justice Castille, established the Elder Law Task Force to focus on legal issues affecting older Pennsylvanians. He noted at that time: "The needs of this growing population will continue for years to come, especially in regard to guardianship, elder abuse and access to justice. Now is the time to put into place solutions that will allow older Pennsylvanians to age without worries that they will be abused or that their money will be taken." The Office of Elder Justice in the Courts and Advisory Council on Elder Justice, established in 2015, are part of Ron Castille's legacy of service to Pennsylvania.

"On behalf of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, I extend my heartfelt condolences to Chief Justice Castille's wife, Susan Kilgus Castille, and to his family, friends and all who had the privilege of

serving alongside him. We honor his legacy of service to our country and our Commonwealth, and we remain grateful for his many contributions to the Pennsylvania judiciary."

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