

AOPC^{CONNECTED}



Issue 4, 2023

In this issue

Read about a new project spearheaded by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to engage young lawyers, the appointment of the next deputy court administrator, as well as parting words from the retiring court administrator, county court highlights and more.

Pennsylvania Conference of State Trial Judges Signals Support for Project LITIGATE

In a unanimous vote during their annual conference, the Pennsylvania Conference of State Trial Judges (PCSTJ) endorsed the work of a statewide taskforce of bar groups focused on developing the next generation of civil trial lawyers through Project LITIGATE. The Conference went further and adopted best practices by trial judges to advance the goals of Project LITIGATE.

Developed in response to a continued decline in the number of young lawyers with civil trial and litigation experience, Project LITIGATE – Lawyers Initiative to Improve next Generation Attorneys’ Trial Experience – aims to encourage law firms to take a pledge to provide training for young attorneys in case planning and preparation, taking of depositions and presenting oral arguments leading up to and through trying a case to a jury.

Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice **Christine Donohue**, on behalf of the Court, spearheaded the movement to create opportunities for less experienced lawyers to participate in jury trials.

Justice Donohue is a strong supporter of Project LITIGATE after spending nearly 30 years as a trial attorney before being elected to the bench.

During that time, Justice Donohue says she witnessed a concerning decline in opportunities for young lawyers to hone their skills as trial attorneys. The downward trend in the number of cases being tried to juries has continued and seasoned attorneys are presenting those cases.

“We are at a tipping point within our own profession. Taking the LITIGATE pledge is a statement of commitment to preserving access to competent trial counsel in the future.”

During their recent conference, trial judges statewide adopted a resolution acknowledging the impact that the decline in civil cases moving to trial is having on future generations of trial attorneys and moved to support efforts to ensure the public will have continued access to properly trained attorneys.

Allegheny County Administrative Judge **Christine Ward**, immediate past president of the Pennsylvania Conference of State Trial Judges, chaired a taskforce of trial judges who studied the participation of young lawyers in trials and developed recommendations to



Justice Christine Donohue

create more opportunities.

“The Pennsylvania Conference of State Trial Judges was unanimous in its support of Project LITIGATE and of best practices which can be used by trial judges to facilitate participation of newer lawyers in court proceedings,” said Judge Ward.

“Project LITIGATE not only benefits the next generation of trial lawyers and their clients but also the trial court in the efficient and orderly adjudication of cases.”

Montgomery County President Judge **Carolyn Carluccio** was elected as the new PCSTJ president during the conference and has expressed support for this key initiative moving forward.

“It is important that we, as the conference representing all Pennsylvania state trial judges, support this important initiative,” Carluccio said. “While law firms need to be proactive in allowing newer members of the bar to be actively involved in courtroom proceedings, our trial judges can encourage their participation and assure the client that the senior attorney will still be involved.”

Project LITIGATE Chair Attorney John Gismondi noted that the support of the trial judges “lends credibility to the program. Trial judges are a vital cog in the overall effort because they have influence over what happens in the courtroom and who is being permitted to participate in oral argument and trials.”

Farewell Thoughts from the Court Administrator

In April, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court announced the upcoming retirement of Court Administrator **Geoff Moulton**, who advised the Court that he will depart at the end of September after seven years of service to the Pennsylvania judiciary.

AOPConnected recently sat down with Geoff as he reflected on an illustrious career dedicated to upholding justice, discussing the highlights of his time with the judiciary and leading the AOPC, as well as his upcoming plans in retirement and parting words of advice to colleagues.

Q: What are your retirement plans and what are you most looking forward to?

A: My wife, Lisa, and I have bought a home in Tucson, Arizona, where we plan to spend about seven months per year – we'll head back east before the temperatures reach 100 degrees! I'll be teaching a course at the University of Arizona College of Law on State Courts and State Constitutional Law, hoping to capture and pass on some of what I've learned in the last seven years working in the Pennsylvania judicial system. I'm also looking forward to having more time to read, play, travel and spend time with our kids and grandkids.

Q: What are some of the highlights of your professional journey?

A: At the beginning of my career, I had the privilege of clerking for judges on both the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit and the U.S. Supreme Court. Those were tremendous learning experiences. Since then, I've been fortunate to have a series of interesting and challenging positions, from federal prosecutor and chief counsel to a U.S. Senator, to Superior Court judge. I've also worked on two significant stand-alone projects – after-action reviews of the ATF raid on the Branch Davidian compound and the criminal investigation of Jerry Sandusky.

None of those positions or projects was more important, more interesting, or more satisfying than that of my current post as court administrator, working with three different chief justices. A lot has transpired since I came to Harrisburg: a global pandemic, two rounds of redistricting, highly contested elections and election issues and the sudden death of a beloved Chief. I feel as though I've packed a lifetime of experiences into just a few short years.



Geoff Moulton

Q: What are you most proud of during your time as court administrator?

A: Helping to manage the court system during the pandemic. With the support and guidance of the Supreme Court, all of us at AOPC and in the judicial districts worked incredibly hard to keep the courts open and accessible to the public under unprecedented circumstances.

At the outset, I worked with then Chief Justice **Thomas Saylor** and his chief clerk **John Witherow** on a daily (almost hourly) basis to chart a path going forward. The team at AOPC – from senior leadership to brand-new hires – was incredible, as were president judges and district court administrators.

While we didn't get everything right, I'm proud of how we pulled together and, looking back, I think we did a good job. Just as important, we learned a great deal about how to do a better job delivering fair, efficient and effective justice into the future.

Q: Do you have any advice for current or future employees?

A: My basic career advice, which may seem unduly modest but has been my guide, is find things to do that are both interesting and useful. Most of us won't have the chance to change the world, but doing small things to make it a little better for those around us can be very satisfying.

Q: What do you hope will be your legacy?

A: I leave that question to others. I just hope that folks remember me as someone who worked hard and always tried to do the right thing for the right reasons.

New Deputy Court Administrator Announced

At the end of July, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court announced the appointment of **David Price** as the next deputy court administrator, replacing **Andrea Tuominen** who is succeeding **Geoff Moulton** as state court administrator following his retirement at the end of September.

Price currently serves as the deputy chief counsel with the AOPC, where he has worked in the Legal Department since 1998 in various roles.

The deputy court administrator is actively involved in nearly every aspect of the AOPC's work, overseeing all day-to-day administration and operations while fulfilling the court administrator's responsibilities in her absence.

"Throughout his 25-year tenure with the AOPC, Mr. Price has contributed significantly to the advancement of our judicial system, consistently providing sound guidance and knowledge while demonstrating an ability to navigate complex challenges that arise," said Chief Justice of Pennsylvania **Debra Todd**. "He brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the position, with a demonstrated track record of leadership and a deep understanding of the court system."

"On behalf of the Court, we have the utmost confidence in Mr. Price and are excited to welcome him into this new role."

"I'm honored and humbled by this opportunity to serve the judiciary as the next deputy court administrator. It is a privilege to continue to support the



David Price

administration of justice," said Price.

"Throughout my career, I have witnessed the profound impact that a well-functioning justice system can have on individuals and communities. As I assume this new role, I eagerly anticipate building upon our collective achievements and fostering an environment that prioritizes accessibility, fairness and transparency," he said.

In his current role, Price serves as second-in-command of the Legal Department. He heads the Department's Information Technology Unit which assists the IT staff with the creation and maintenance of various statewide case management systems. In addition, he was the Chair of AOPC's Public Access Ad Hoc Committee which crafted a policy concerning public access to electronic case records of the Unified Judicial System, adopted by the Supreme Court in 2007.

This policy governs information released via public web docket sheets and, upon request, for data maintained in the statewide case management system.

He was also involved in the creation of the *Case Records Public Access Policy of the Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania* and its subsequent amendments, providing access to the records of the courts across the commonwealth, while safeguarding personal identifiers and sensitive information that may be contained in documents with the courts.

Prior to his employment with AOPC, Price was an assistant district attorney for Susquehanna County, Pa. He received his J.D. from Widener University School of Law and his B.A. from the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown.

New SCJAP President

Delaware County Magisterial District Judge (MDJ) **Wilden H. Davis** recently assumed the role of president of the Special Court Judges Association of Pennsylvania (SCJAP).

Making history as the first African American within 50 years to be sworn in as president of the SCJAP at the 49th State Association District Conference held in June, Judge Davis received proclamations from Governor Josh Shapiro, Lieutenant Governor Austin Davis and Chief Justice of Pennsylvania **Debra Todd**.

Judge Davis was elected as an MDJ in 2011 and took the bench in



MDJ Wilden H. Davis

January of 2012. Since the beginning of his tenure, Judge Davis has been actively involved with the Delaware County Magisterial District Judges Association and SCJAP District

11, having previously served as president of both organizations.

He is the former chairman of SCJAP's Budget and Finance Committee and has served on other committees, such as Court Administration, Budget and Finance and Strategic Planning.

In addition to serving as the chairman of the Board of Trustees at Bethany Baptist Church, he is also a board member with the Chester Education Foundation, past master of Eastern Light Lodge #46 and a member of the Constables Education and Training Board.

Rick Pierce Becomes NACM President

Judicial Programs Administrator **Rick Pierce** recently became the president of the National Association for Court Management (NACM).

"I have the wonderful opportunity to work with outstanding court professionals in Pennsylvania and now build upon professional relationships forged while attending NACM conferences and committee meetings," Pierce said.

Speaking to his peers, Pierce said, "Throughout our careers in court management, we have learned how essential trusting relationships directly correlate to success. We are keenly aware of the challenges posed when forming these bonds with co-workers, court users and court stakeholders.

As court professionals we must continue to use relational power to every person we touch: a peer, supervisor, a self-represented litigant, a victim and so many others. Connection with our court customers, partners, peers and employees will help instill the public's trust and confidence in our

courts across this nation."

Pierce has served in the field of court administration for the past 29 years.

Prior to his appointment at the AOPC, Pierce was the district court administrator for Cumberland County. Prior to his nearly five-year tenure as court administrator, Pierce was the county's assistant court administrator from 1988-1997.

As judicial programs administrator, he is responsible for implementation of programs and education in court administration at the general and limited jurisdiction court levels.

Pierce's primary focus is on education and professional development of district court administrators. Where appropriate, his educational material focuses on the dynamic relationship between the president judge and the district court administrator. Development and production of in-person and online learning, in addition to onboarding of new administrators and consultation when called upon, are the primary forums employed to



Rick Pierce

advance the professional growth of these local court executives.

Pierce served as the president for the Mid-Atlantic Association for Court Management (MAACM) from 2005-2006. Previously he has served on the MAACM advisory board from 1997-2005.

He has been an active member of the Pennsylvania Association of Court Management (PACM) since its inception in 1989. He has served as a board member from 1994-2001, culminating in his presidency in 2000-2001.

The AOPC congratulates Rick on this well-deserved achievement!

Assistant IT Director Earns National Recognition from Institute for Court Management

Wendy Hosch, assistant director of AOPC/IT, has recently been certified as a Fellow of the Institute for Court Management (ICM) at the National Center for State Courts (NCSC).

ICM Fellows are court professionals seeking to understand the connection between leadership and data-driven decision-making, with the ultimate goal of creating a judicial system that works for everyone.

As part of this program, Hosch completed a rigorous four-step process that measures an individual's aptitude in court management, research and executive leadership through three levels of certification.

Following the completion of her coursework, an applied research period began in Oct. 2022, with her final formal white paper due in May 2023 and published thereafter.

Her [research paper](#), Influence of Court Culture on the Adoption of Data and Technology Initiatives, aims to help courts understand



Wendy Hosch

critical success factors from a project management perspective of technology and data initiatives, thereby helping to reduce the number of failed projects and increase the efficiencies and effectiveness of those processes.

When asked about her research, Hosch explained, "Courts, by design, are focused on precedent and authority, and they are thoughtful and slow to change. Those factors make technology projects more difficult and challenging for the courts, but not

impossible. Technology-based initiatives are quick moving, have many factors and threads running through them, making the two considerations diametrically opposed."

"The end result of my research is that people matter and are a critical factor in the success or failure of any project," she said.

"Creating buy-in with people on strategic initiatives is essential to the success of any project. The human factor is the critical factor in a project's success, adoption or failure. Other risks and factors can be mitigated or resolved."

After presenting her research to a peer review panel of national court leaders in June, a graduation ceremony and reception were held at the U.S. Supreme Court on July 21 and her paper was just recently published by NCSC.

Congratulations Wendy!

Veterans Court App: Android Version Launched

The Veterans Treatment Court has officially launched the Android version of their app called PA Vet Court Professionals.

The app, provided by the AOPC, provides a tool for Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) professionals across the state of Pennsylvania.

Professionals who use the app will benefit from a video library that holds videos on VTC overviews, team dynamics, summits and volunteer mentors.

Users can also find a helpful FAQ section, newsletters and many different downloadable guides to support veterans and military personnel.





Legislative Roundup

by Damian J. Wachter, Esq.

The 2023-24 General Appropriations Act (GAA) was signed into law – subject to one line-item veto – on Aug. 3. The passage of the GAA represents approximately 80 percent of the judicial budget. Action is still necessary on legislation to reauthorize statutory surcharges that provide for the remaining – and significant – portion of the budget.

Known collectively as “Act 49,” the surcharges, which are levied on court filings enumerated in statute, are appropriated for the operation of the judicial branch. The surcharges expired on July 31 and separate legislation from the GAA is required to reauthorize them.

Additionally, language annually diverting \$15 million from the Judicial Computer System Augmentation Account remains in statute. Suspensions of the statute were included as part of the previous two budgets, and similar language must be included – as separate legislation from the GAA – as a part of the 2023-24 budget to avoid diversion of the funds.

2023-2024 GAA

[Act 1A of 2023](#) is the 2023-24 GAA. The act provides for \$395.1 million in state funding for the judiciary, a nine percent increase. Additionally, the act appropriates \$46.9 million for the Judicial Computer System. Except for a modest 1.8 percent increase in 2022-23, Act 1A represents the first significant funding increase for the judicial branch since 2016-17.

On tap – Fall 2023

The Senate has scheduled Aug. 30 as a session day to address the remaining aspects of the budget. It then will return for the fall session the week of Sept. 18. The House, which is again deadlocked at 101-101 with one vacancy, is scheduled to return the week of Sept. 25. A special election to fill the vacancy is slated for Sept. 19.

Upon the legislature’s return, it is expected that several issues of interest to the judicial branch will be up for discussion. They include:

- Expansion of the limited access/Clean Slate statute - [House Bill 689](#)
- Creation of the Indigent Defense Advisory Committee within PCCD - [Senate Bill 371](#) and [House Bill 1085](#)
- Increase in the common pleas judicial complement - [Senate Bill 361](#)
- Probation reform - [Senate Bill 838](#)
- Guardianship reform - [Senate Bill 506](#)



{Damian Wachter, Esq. is the director of Legislative Affairs.}

Lycoming County Drug Courts Celebrates 25 Years

Lycoming County Courts recently commemorated the 25th anniversary of the establishment of its Drug Court by hosting a celebration during a treatment court graduation.

"It's hard to believe that it's been 25 years since Drug Court started in Lycoming County. I have been fortunate to work with a group of dedicated professionals, willing to try out this new type of program that was focused more on rehabilitation than incarceration," said Lycoming County President Judge **Nancy Butts**.

In looking back, the thing I'm most proud of is showing our community of people, whether it be those in or out of the system, that people can change. Sometimes they just need a little help. And with that help, they create wonderful lives for themselves and the people around them. Through that success they make this community a better place."

Since the program's establishment in 1998, nearly 1,000 individuals have participated in the county's Drug Court.



*Pennsylvania House of Representative Jamie L. Flick presenting Lycoming County President Judge **Nancy L. Butts** with a citation, honoring Lycoming County Drug Court for its 25-year anniversary and also recognizing President Judge Butts as the founder of Lycoming County Drug Court in 1998.*

Problem-Solving Courts Awarded Grants

Since 2017, AOPC's Problem-Solving Courts unit has awarded over \$2.5 million in grant funding to problem-solving court programs across the commonwealth.

After advising that counties could apply for up to \$10,000 in discretionary grant funding and up to \$15,000 in implementation funding in January, the unit recently awarded \$328,000 in grants to 36 programs statewide.

Discretionary grants are designed to enhance operational problem-solving courts by supporting program functions or ancillary services used by the participants of the program, while implementation grants are designed to offset some of the costs related to starting a

new problem-solving court.

Most programs that received awards requested funding to support or expand drug testing protocols in accordance with best practice standards, send team members to the Pennsylvania Association of Treatment Court Professionals (PATCP) conference and purchase incentives such as gift cards or small tokens which are used to reinforce rehabilitation and positive behavior such as progress towards treatment goals, participation in prosocial activities, employment, etc.

Grant funds can also be used to assist participants with transportation, emergency housing, food, etc.

Applications are competitively scored on elements such as Problem-Solving Adult and Juvenile Courts Information System (PAJCIS) data, adherence to the best practice standards and budget justification.

As part of accepting a grant from AOPC, grantees must enter data into PAJCIS.

"The unit is hopeful that as the data becomes more robust, it will provide a more accurate representation of Pennsylvania's problem-solving courts and the important work being done across the commonwealth," said Problem-Solving Courts Administrator **Angela Lowry**.

Cybersecurity in the Courts

In May, AOPC/Judicial District Operations and Programs hosted a webinar for judges and court administrators on cybersecurity.

The webinar was presented by representatives from Mission Critical Partners, a consulting firm dedicated to assisting public sector and mission-critical clients develop and maintain their communications and information technology infrastructure.

The presentation explored the importance and timeliness of the cybersecurity topic and why it is a concern for the courts and criminal justice system, examined lessons learned from past cybersecurity breaches and offered solutions for courts and organizations seeking to develop a cybersecurity plan to protect sensitive data.

The scope of the cybersecurity challenge and lack of awareness or preparation is a major concern for Mission Critical Partners and those studying the cyber workspace.

The tight labor market is contributing to the complexity of this challenge, as the IT sector faces a severe shortage of cyber engineers and experts trained to combat bad actors seeking to steal data and interrupt vital programs and legal procedures.

An overarching theme of the presentation focuses on the responsibilities of the individual to stymie cybersecurity attacks.

While an enterprise-wide strategy is essential, most cybersecurity attacks occur in ways that are entirely preventable through prudent action of individual users.

Further research from federal security officials discovered that

According to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, housed within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security:



47 percent of mission-critical agencies have encountered a cybersecurity incident.



65 percent have no data migration strategies in place.



35 percent lack funding for cyber maintenance costs.



63 percent do not have cybersecurity incident response plans.

most attacks come from poorly maintained password policies, phishing schemes, inefficient network security patching or simply failing to change the default username and password of Wi-Fi routers.

Fixing some of these vulnerabilities requires little time and resources, and Mission Critical Partners encourages swift action. Shifting to a proactive mindset and keeping the organization's collective guard up is also important.

Cybersecurity preparedness must be done in a strategic way. Mission Critical Partners has seen numerous positive trends in cybersecurity preparedness, including increased funding at the federal and state level, a growth in

cybersecurity solution offerings in the courts, and an industry-wide push to incorporate cybersecurity into every agency's continuity of operations plan (COOP), disaster recovery plan and crisis communications plan.

Mission Critical Partners encouraged participants to make cybersecurity a priority because it is essential to protecting data, privacy and operational effectiveness, or administration of justice in the court system.

Looking to continue productive dialogue on this critical topic, AOPC/Judicial District Operations and Programs will host more webinars and programming in the near future.

Keys to Overall Cyber Success:

Forging the Right Approach Long-Term Plan

1. Cybersecurity planning and execution should be driven from **public sector leadership** through the organization, **not managed as another IT project**
2. Manage the cyber defense strategy/plan as an **ongoing journey, not a one-time event**
3. Any network that facilitates the transport of a court or records application, everything connected to it, should be **considered within scope**
4. Leverage **established cyber defense IT standards** as your basis, near and long-term

Your Mission Matters

M MissionCriticalPartners

Slide from cybersecurity webinar

Kinship Care Placement with Family or Friends is Focus of Pa. Dependency Court Attorney Educational Session

On Aug. 15 at the Inn at Villanova, the Pennsylvania State Roundtable's Kinship Care Taskforce concluded its third statewide, regional education session for dependency court attorneys.

The State Roundtable is made up of state and national leaders with specific expertise in dependency matters and the Taskforce is chaired by Justice **Kevin M. Dougherty** on behalf of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. Kinship care refers to grandparents, other relatives and even family friends who are caring for children.

The sessions provided dependency court attorneys with the same education previously provided to dependency court judges, hearing officers and child welfare professionals on the importance of safe kinship care use when a child can no longer remain in the care of their parents/guardians.

Over 80 dependency court attorneys representing 10 eastern counties were in attendance.

Justice Dougherty opened the session with a message from the bench on prioritizing safe kinship care.

"Removing a child from their home can be a traumatic experience for children and their parents, but one that can be lessened by enlisting the support of relatives and kin," said Justice Dougherty. "We must do better at creating a sense of urgency around kinship care. We must help preserve family and culture when a child is removed from their home."

Philadelphia Family Court Supervising Judge **Walter**



J. Olszewski spoke next, emphasizing the positive impact of high-quality legal representation in dependency court proceedings.

"Attorneys play a critical role in bringing forth kinship options for the judge's consideration," Judge Olszewski said. "It's not enough to wait for the child welfare agency to present information on kin. An attorney should talk to their client, gather the names of available kin and advocate on behalf of their client in court."

Taskforce members Cathy Volponi, Esq., director, Allegheny County Bar Foundation Juvenile Court Project, and Marisa McClellan, Esq., administrator, Dauphin County Social Services for Children and Youth, led a discussion on the role of the guardian ad litem, parent attorney, child welfare solicitor and counsel for the child. **Cori Dunn**, Esq., Office of Children and Families in the Courts judicial analyst, provided a thorough legal analysis of kinship care.

Research shows that when children are placed with relatives or kin, outcomes are better in the following areas:

- Placement stability.
- School stability and positive educational outcomes.
- Reduced re-entry into the child welfare system.
- Permanency through reunification, adoption or guardianship.
- Better physical, behavioral and mental health outcomes.
- Increased likelihood of living with or staying connected to siblings.
- Greater preservation of race and cultural identity, including community connections.

Currently in Pennsylvania, 44 percent of all children in out-of-home care are placed in kinship care, compared to 20 percent in 2006, according to CPCMS data. Nationally, this number is 35 percent (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2022).

Presently, 25 counties are at or above the statewide average, an increase of five counties from the previous year, and 16 counties have at least half of all out-of-home children living in kinship care.

Chester County launches program to transport people to court appointments, recovery services

Reprinted with permission from WHYY; By Kenny Cooper

Beginning July 1, Chester County residents can catch a free ride to problem-solving court appointments.

The Chester County Department of Adult Probation, Parole & Pretrial Services partnered with Lehigh Valley-based [Danny's Ride](#) to roll out the pilot program to remove transportation woes for people who must attend the county's drug court, mental health court, recovery court, or veterans court.

"A consistent theme is that individuals struggle with transportation," said Chris Pawlowski, Chief of Adult Probation, Parole & Pretrial Services. "Danny's Ride is a big step forward to help those individuals who participate in the problem-solving courts to meet mandated conditions such as court reviews, drug testing, treatment, and even getting to and from work, medical appointments, or other important appointments."

Nancy Knoebel [founded Danny's Ride in 2020 in honor of her son Danny Teichman](#), who died in 2016 after he attempted to self-medicate his withdrawal symptoms with kratom. Danny's Ride began serving Lehigh and Northampton counties, but is now growing.

Funding for the project comes by way of the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. The state agency awarded Danny's Ride a \$100,000 grant to expand their program.

Chester County was chosen to be one of the three counties included in the expansion, according to Pawlowski.

"Too often, the lack of public transportation in Chester County and the cost of gas become reasons people cannot complete the necessary steps to fulfill their legal obligations," said Chester County Commissioners Marian Moskowitz, Josh Maxwell, and Michelle Kichline in a joint statement.

Pawlowski said the pilot program runs for a year, but there is a possibility for an extension.

"I think the most successful thing that we can get out of this is spending every dollar that is available to us and making sure that everyone who has the need for transportation receives that support. We are a county that strives to help individuals with rehabilitation and getting the treatment they need, but also setting them up to be successful in the future with employment and community supports," Pawlowski said.

Pawlowski said about 200 individuals currently participate in one of Chesco's problem-solving courts.

Source: <https://whyy.org/articles/chester-county-free-transportation-program-court-appointments-recovery-services/>

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Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

Debra Todd

Chief Justice of Pennsylvania

Christine Donohue

Justice

Kevin M. Dougherty

Justice

David N. Wecht

Justice

Sallie Updyke Mundy

Justice

P. Kevin Brobson

Justice

DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT:

Communications

AOPC/Communications represents the AOPC before the media and the public.

With both international and statewide communications experience, having served in previous communications director roles for the Department of Human Services, the Liquor Control Board and the PA Senate, **Stacey Witalec** now uses her industry experience to lead the AOPC communications team – acting as the director of communications and the spokesperson for the AOPC and the Supreme Court since 2017.

The team manages and oversees all communications functions for the judiciary including responding to international, national and statewide media inquiries, preparing for high-profile trials, coordination of social media engagements, and development and execution of court events.

The department maintains content for both the PA courts website and the Intranet, in addition to managing the courts' social media – primarily the PA Courts Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Communications strategizes how to effectively showcase the judiciary's projects and programs using a diverse collection of both print and digital media. The team continues to expand the courts' online presence using the most effective digital platforms and tools, with an increased focus on video production.

In recent years, the department has increased its focus on internal communications, working closely with Human Resources to develop and conduct employee surveys and employee engagement and appreciation initiatives.

Working with both IT and Research and Statistics, the team also fields reporter inquiries concerning data and information uniquely accessible through the Judicial Computer System.

The communications team is responsible for producing the following publications:

- AOPC's newsletter – AOPCConnected
- The judiciary's annual report
- Monthly infographics
- The judiciary's annual budget summary



(l to r): Gretchen Smith, Olivia Antonucci, Kyle Kauffman, Casey Scheffler, Kim Bathgate, Stacey Witalec

Welcoming New DGS Facilities Representative to the PJC



Ronald Fuller

In April, **Ronald Fuller** joined the Pennsylvania Judicial Center's (PJC) team, replacing Bob Soutner who retired in July.

Ron works for the Department of General Services (DGS) in its Facilities Division and will be responsible for facility-related maintenance and repairs at the PJC, as well as other DGS-managed buildings. He will coordinate his work

with AOPC Administrative Services.

From power washing the parking garage to replacing light bulbs and repairing broken doors, Ron's responsibilities span a diverse array of tasks that contribute to the overall functionality and aesthetic appeal of the PJC.

Please join us in extending a warm welcome to Ron as you see him around the PJC!

Adventures of an AOPC Employee

Theresa Mack, who joined the AOPC at the end of June as a clerical assistant in the PJC, holds many different titles outside of work – veteran, traveler, teacher and mother.

Theresa comes to the AOPC with a wealth of experience working for the Commonwealth, including at the Liquor Control Board, PennDot, the Department of Corrections and the Pa. Board of Probation and Parole.

Prior to her work with the state, she served in the U.S. Army for six years where she worked as a multiple-launch rocket and missile system repairer. During her service, she was stationed in Germany where she moved with her family.

"It was one of the best decisions I ever made," said Mack.

During her experience living in Germany, she realized her passion for travel and recently visited Tokyo, Japan.

"The people in both countries were very kind and helpful. They especially loved it when we tried to speak their language," she said.



Theresa Mack

"When I was stationed in Germany, it was my first experience living in a foreign country and I found out quickly how important it was to be able to communicate with people. I decided then that I wanted to teach English someday and be a part of the whole citizenship process."

And so she did.

She later obtained a Teaching English as a Foreign Language certification and has enjoyed teaching English to Taiwanese students online, who mainly want to learn proper grammar and idioms.

She hopes to continue her travels and visit Hong Kong, Australia and South Africa someday, where she is excited to experience new cultures and food.

Back to School: Traffic citations in school zones

Overtaking or passing a school bus

(Title 75 section 3345)

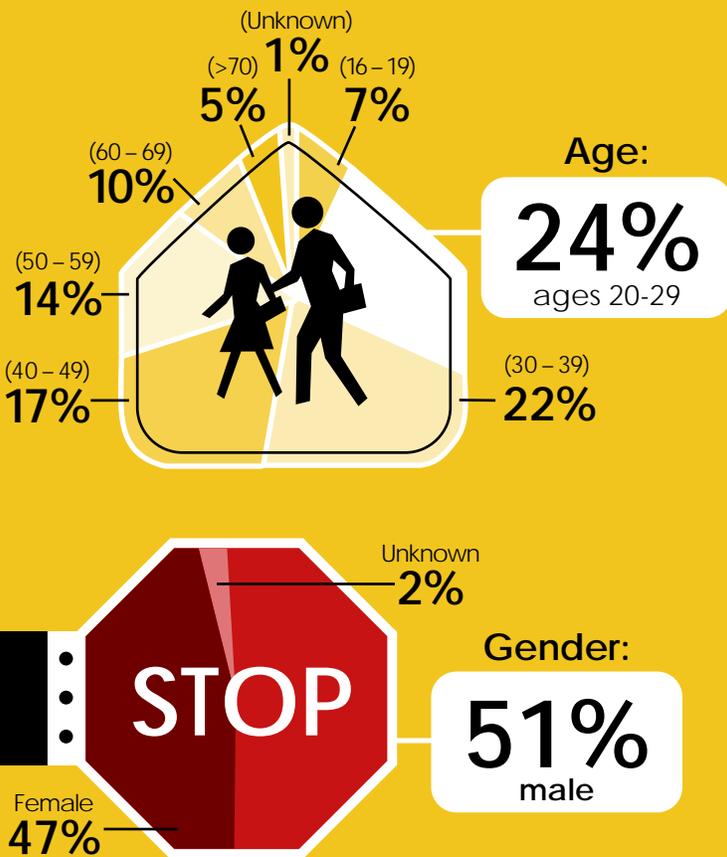
Drivers of a vehicle shall stop at least 10 feet before reaching the school bus when the red signal lights are flashing and the side stop signal arms are activated.

Speeding in a school zone

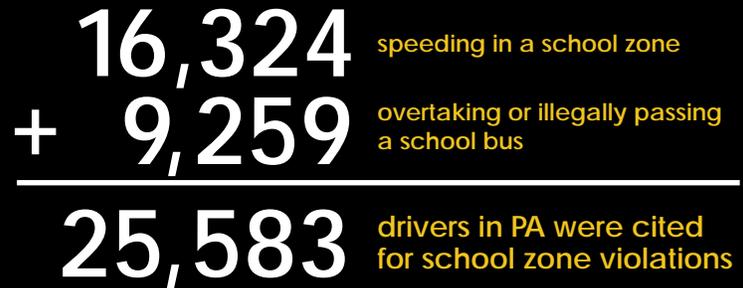
(Title 75 section 3365)

When passing through a school zone, no person shall drive a vehicle at a greater speed than 15 miles per hour.

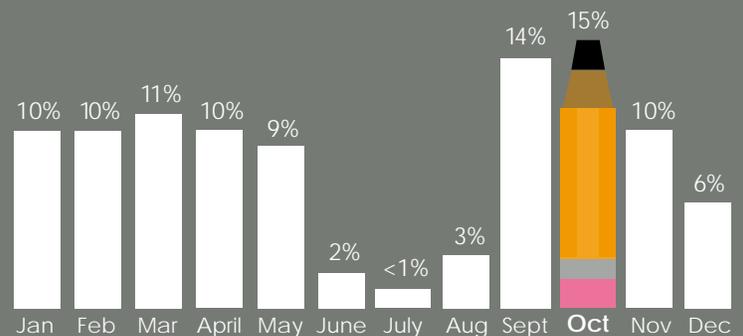
Demographics of those cited for both violations:



PA driver citations (2018-2022):

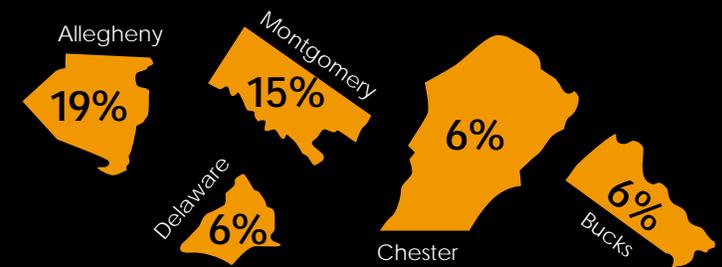


School zone and bus citations by month:

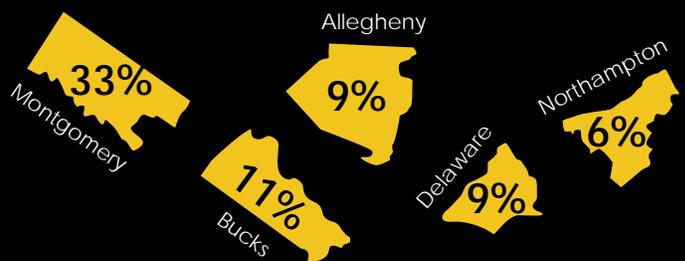


Counties with the highest driver citations:

Speeding in a school zone



Meeting/overtaking a school bus:



Court Space Innovation Workshop informs, inspires new design thinking



Building partnerships with funders, developing compelling business cases for long-term needs, and communicating enhanced public service were among the best practices shared by court professionals attending the [Court Space Innovation Challenge](#) workshop earlier this summer.

Thirteen courts gathered in Indianapolis in late June to learn about national court space innovation efforts and to hear how local jurisdictions are adopting modern design thinking to meet current and future needs.

Earlier this year, NCSC asked courts to submit court space planning and design examples for an opportunity to receive technical assistance and participate in the summer workshop funded by a State Justice Institute grant.

During the workshop, project teams gave presentations that focused on four major court space innovation themes:

- Rethinking Adjudication Spaces
- Enhancing Office and Public Service Environments
- Implementing Courtroom Technology/Hybrid Courtrooms
- Renovating Historic Courts

One of the spaces featured was the workshop venue, the new [Indianapolis Community Justice Center](#). According to Marion County Superior Court Chief Technology Officer Amitav Thamba, the 12-story

courthouse building has an adjacent county jail and a new building for the probation department. It also features collaborative spaces for judges and staff; secure access to facilities; ubiquitous access to immersive technologies; automated courtroom scheduling; exhibits and evidence display in the courtrooms; work rooms for attorney-client meetings; and accessible information for the public using kiosks and display boards.

"Participants headed back to their courts energized and inspired by the work of their peers and armed with information about new ideas for the planning and design of courthouses," said NCSC Principal Court Management Consultant Nathan Hall.

Attendees also left the workshop with strategies to deal with the costs of building and renovating court space and the tendency to revert to established precedents and traditional courthouse models.

"New paradigms, including the focus on enhanced public access to the courts and the need to leverage technology to operate courts more effectively, can inform the physical environment in profound ways," Hall added. "The court participants agreed that the need for physical court space is not going away but also agreed that technology and the increase in virtual services provided by courts should inform the shape, size, and configuration of courthouses moving forward."

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Around the Judiciary



Anthony Cosentino, Esq., **Andrea Tuominen** and Franklin County President Judge **Shawn D. Meyers**



In early July, Justice **P. Kevin Brobson** swore in Marie Conley as a new member of the Judicial Conduct Board.



On June 30, a civic observation of the Declaration of Independence and Ratification of the Pennsylvania Constitution was held in the historic courtroom of the Franklin County Judicial Center in Chambersburg. Deputy Court Administrator **Andrea Tuominen** spoke on the topics of the importance of the issuance of the Declaration of Independence and adoption of the 1968 Pennsylvania Constitution.



In July at the 86th National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Annual Conference in Baltimore, Justice **Kevin Dougherty**, Lycoming Common Pleas Judge **Ryan Tira**, Office of Children and Families in the Courts Director **Sandy Moore** and Judicial Administrator **Shane Carey** presented on autism spectrum disorder and juvenile dependency court. Over 60 people attended the session.

Have a photo or story idea?

We are always looking for story ideas or photos of staff and judges out and about in the community. Send us an email with the scoop!

CommunicationsOffice@pacourts.us.



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Check out our [newsletter archive!](#)

Judges Receive SCJAP Awards



Bucks County Magisterial District Judge **Daniel E. Baranoski** received the John J. Jeffers Memorial Award.



Allegheny County Magisterial District Judge **Richard G. King** was the honored recipient of the Themis Lifetime Achievement Award.

The Special Court Judges Association of Pennsylvania (SCJAP) recently recognized the work and dedication of two judges by presenting them with distinguished honors for demonstrating outstanding service, participation, knowledge and accomplishments that bettered the SCJAP.