



News for Immediate Release

Sept. 6, 2024

Supreme Court Appoints New Members to Commission on Judicial Independence

HARRISBURG — Dedicated to fostering a better understanding of the role of the Pennsylvania courts, Chief Justice Debra Todd today renewed the Supreme Court’s commitment to the Commission on Judicial Independence.

“The role the court system plays in the lives of Pennsylvanians is profound, yet far too often there is little to no public discourse to further the understanding of the breadth and depth of our connection,” Chief Justice Todd said. “We welcome our newest commission members and look forward to the positive impact their collective advocacy, education and civil engagement efforts will have on families and their children.”

As the 20th anniversary of the Commission approaches, the Court has appointed new members, under the leadership of Chair Pennsylvania Superior Court Judge Mary Jane Bowes and Vice-Chair Charles Becker, Esquire, Kline & Specter PC including:

- Honorable Bonnie Brigance Leadbetter – President Judge Emerita, Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania
- Honorable D. Michael Fisher, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit
- Honorable James J. Fitzgerald (retired), Supreme Court of Pennsylvania
- Honorable Mark R. Hornak, Chief Judge, U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania
- Honorable Steven C. Tolliver, Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas
- Honorable Jordan B. Yeager, Bucks County Court of Common Pleas
- Mark C. Alexander, Esquire, Arthur J. Kania Dean and Professor of Law, Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law
- J. Andrew Crompton, Esquire, McNees Wallace & Nurick LLC
- Ken Gormley, Esquire, President and Professor of Law, Duquesne University
- John J. Hare, Esquire, Marshall Dennehey
- Michael J. McDonald, Esquire, McDonald & McGregor LLC
- James E. McErlane, Esquire, Lamb McErlane PC
- Neil T. O’Donnell, Esquire, O’Donnell Law Offices
- Andrew F. Susko, Esquire, White & Williams LLP

Commission Advisors include:

- Honorable Thomas G. Saylor – Chief Justice Emeritus, Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

- Honorable Renée Cohn Jubelirer, President Judge, Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania
- Honorable John E. Jones III, President, Dickinson College and retired Chief Judge, U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania
- Robert C. Heim, Esquire, Dechert, LLP

“Decisional judicial independence directly influences people’s trust and confidence in the courts; something that is of vital importance not only in our commonwealth, but in our nation,” Commission Chair Superior Court Judge Mary Jane Bowes said. “I am honored to serve the Court in this most important effort to take often misunderstood issues of judicial independence and education and give them new life and voice, through this important commission.”

Vice-Chair Charles Becker added “Since its formation in 2005, the Commission on Judicial Independence has produced excellent programs on judicial decision-making, the role of courts within our constitutional system, and the positive impact that courts have in our communities on a day-to-day basis. I look forward to continuing that work under Judge Bowes’ leadership.”

The Pennsylvania Commission on Judicial Independence was established in 2005 by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania amid growing concerns over unwarranted criticism of courts across the country. Through the Commission, the Court seeks to foster greater understanding by the public about the role of the judiciary and explain the value of an independent judiciary in America.

Since its inception, the commission has created educational programs and seminars for the public, often in collaboration with legal profession partners to help facilitate a positive public discourse about the courts.

More information about the work and role of the Commission is available [here](#).

###

Media contact: Stacey Witalec
717-877-2997