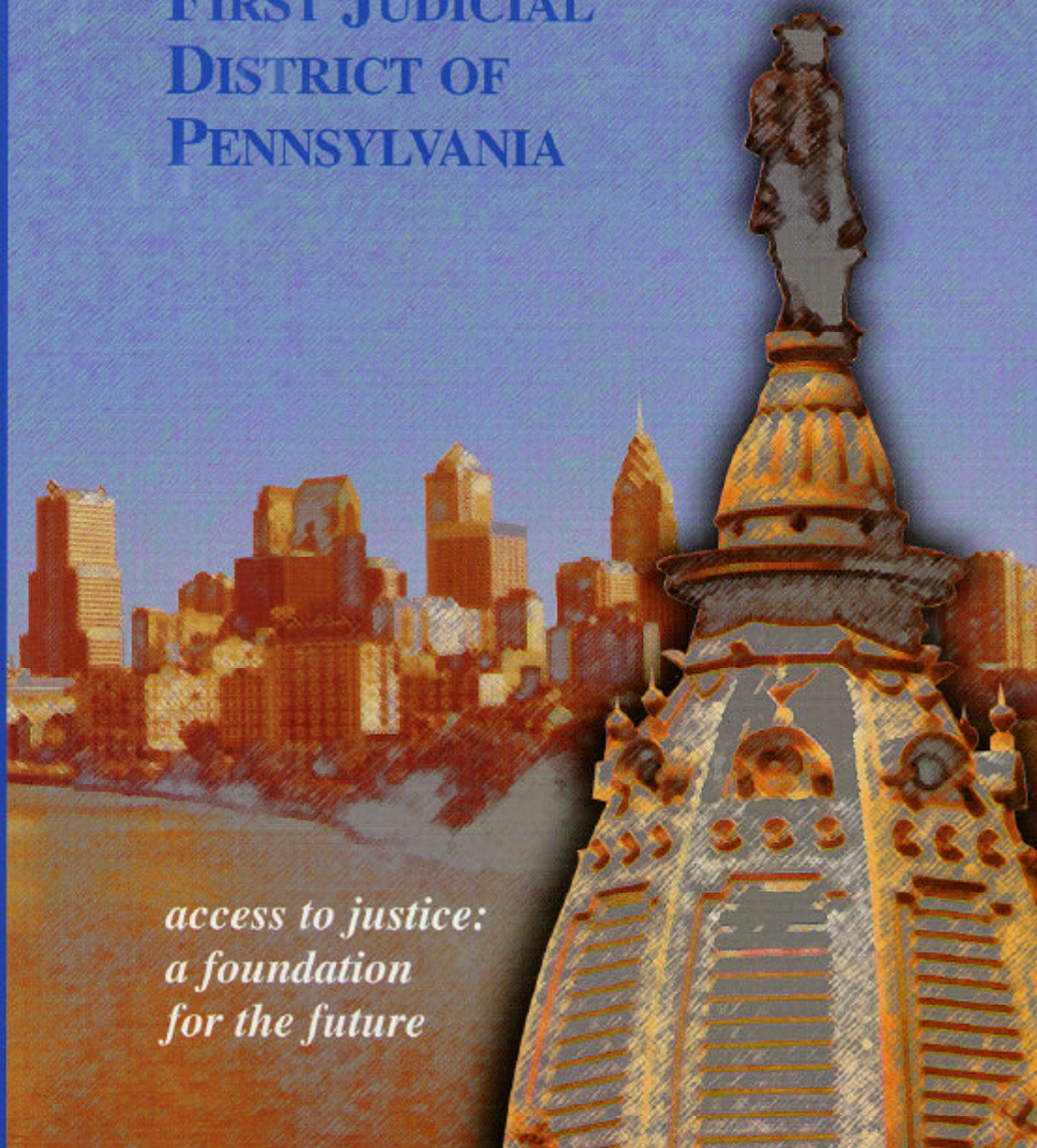




# SPECIAL BIENNIAL REPORT 1996-1997



FIRST JUDICIAL  
DISTRICT OF  
PENNSYLVANIA



*access to justice:  
a foundation  
for the future*





Nancy M. Sobolevitch  
*Court Administrator of Pennsylvania*

## Greetings from the State Court Administrator

Creation of the Administrative Governing Board has provided a first-ever forum for the leadership of the First Judicial District to collectively identify problems and address solutions in a court system with more than 100 judges, 250,000-plus cases and a budget exceeding \$170 million each year.

Increasingly, judicial system management in Pennsylvania reflects the values of collaboration and consensus as evidenced by the Supreme Court's re-establishment of Pennsylvania's Judicial Council and the Administrative Governing Board itself. In a world of ever-increasing litigation, and increasingly complex litigation, the foundation of a joint management structure in Philadelphia's courts underscores how working in a formal, yet cooperative, way can help balance public needs with effective use of scarce government resources.

For Pennsylvania's courts to function ever more effectively on a statewide basis, the work of Philadelphia's dedicated court staff, including the AGB's members, can serve as one example of how future successes may be attained.



The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania (seated, l-r): Justice Stephen A. Zappala, Chief Justice John P. Flaherty, Jr., Justice Ralph J. Cappy (standing, l-r): Justice Sandra Schultz Newman, Justice Ronald D. Castille, Justice Russell M. Nigro, Justice Thomas G. Saylor



Alex Bonavitacola  
*Chair, Administrative Governing Board*

## Greetings from the Chair

It is with great personal pleasure that I introduce the inaugural issue of the First Judicial District's Biennial Report. The Report documents the hard work and dedication of our Judges, administrative personnel and, as importantly, our employees. Their cooperative efforts enabled the First Judicial District to transition from the manual case processing methods of the recent past to the current state-of-the-art technological advances, which have provided the public greater Access to Justice.

During the period covered by this Report, we have moved forward at a brisk pace. As detailed by Administrative Judge John W. Herron, the civil case inventory has been placed on fast-moving tracks, with increasing hands-on case management by judicial team leaders and support staff. Pre-1995 inventory of major civil cases is gone, enabling the Court to promptly and expeditiously dispose of current inventory in accordance with the Trial Performance Standards adopted by the United States Department of Justice and the National Center for State Courts. The able direction of Supervising Judge Legrome D. Davis, and the industrious performance of our criminal process judges, have kept the criminal inventory to a manageable level.

Administrative Judge Paul P. Panepinto implemented programmatic changes to address the needs and concerns of not only juvenile offenders, but also victims and the community. Automation has played an increased role in disposition of support, custody and divorce matters, thereby providing more effective access to justice.

Administrative Judge Petrese B. Tucker continues the tradition of excellence in one of the oldest Orphans' Courts in the nation.

Under the stewardship of President Judge Alan K. Silberstein and Administrative Judge Robert S. Blasi, the Municipal Court of Philadelphia continues its well-established practice of assisting the Court of Common Pleas, in disposing both criminal and civil cases at an ever increasing pace as well as effectively managing their high volume jurisdiction.

The appointment of Judge Bernice DeAngelis as the Administrative Judge for the Traffic Court has brought about internal restructuring of that Court which has generated record collections of traffic fines and judgments, as well as the streamlining of the Court's procedures and introduction of novel programs, including implementation of the "boot and tow" law.

Finally, Joseph J. DiPrimio, Esquire, the Court Administrator of the First Judicial District, has provided invaluable assistance and guidance in unifying the Courts and divisions which compose the First Judicial District, thereby rendering Access to Justice equally uniform and important throughout the District.

On behalf of the public which they serve so well, I thank the judges and employees of the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania.



Joseph J. DiPrimio, Esquire  
*Court Administrator*

## Greeting from the Court Administrator

I am honored at having been provided the opportunity by the Administrative Governing Board to assume a leadership position in this very exciting time during the long and illustrious history of the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania.

Today, more than ever before, the citizens of Philadelphia enjoy access to the judicial process. Notwithstanding our past and recent accomplishments during the 1996-1997 Biennium, First Judicial District judges, administration and staff are individually dedicated members of a larger team whose primary goal is to continue to improve on past performance in bringing accessible justice to the people of Philadelphia.

In the following chapters you will find that the constituent Courts that comprise the District have worked hard to develop and initiate strategies to further "Access to Justice." Importantly, this work also pays homage to the beginnings of the rich history of the Philadelphia Court system that our forefathers provided for us. With their forethought, they built what was, and is today, a foundation for the future.

Mindful of the past, we have implemented modern management techniques to improve service delivery, all the while never resting in our quest for excellence. This report is itself an historical event as it represents the first combined publication of all Courts of the District. For these reasons, this First Judicial District Special 1996-1997 Biennial Report has adopted a theme that reflects the efforts of judges and employees alike: "Access to Justice: A Foundation for the Future".

I truly hope that you will find this inaugural report informative as well as enjoyable.

# 1996-1997 SPECIAL BIENNIAL REPORT

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## Executive Summary

This biennial report represents, for the first time in history, a comprehensive description of the courts and divisions that comprise the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania (FJD) highlighting participant individual and group dedication to the expedient provision of accessible justice. The report is intended to convey a sense of the commitment of the judiciary, administration, and FJD staff to principles extolled in Trial Court Performance Standards as set forth by the Bureau of Justice Assistance of the United States Department of Justice, and the National Center for State Courts. Chief among these is the Court's stewardship of the founding principle of access to justice. A summary of the Access to Justice Standards is included following the Historical Perspective chapter. The report will also review the wide array of services and programs offered to achieve the mission.

To accomplish these goals the Special Report is formatted to mirror the general organizational structure of the District — from the FJD management upper echelon Administrative Governing Board (AGB) through the Common Pleas, Municipal, and Traffic Court levels, including their respective divisional departmental components. Each of the major sections include brief histories and descriptions of the constituent court and divisional organizations, and their purpose, responsibilities, and achievements, featuring biennial initiatives and anticipated advances.

Importantly, readers should also gain an appreciation for the spirit of the FJD organization. District judiciary and staff are teamed to capitalize on individual talents, while mindful of their roles as contributors to common goals. As reaffirmed through the report, sound management and effective coordination produce a work force that, as an entirety, is much greater than merely the sum of its parts. Collectively, FJD judges and employees aspire to provide the highest possible standard of justice, in a fair and accessible manner.

Also, the Special Report will serve to illustrate, through organization charts, graphs, statistics, photos, comments of Court leadership, and revealing examinations of integral units, the current and future administration of justice in the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania — arguably one of the premier judicial systems in the world.

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### Access to Justice: a Foundation for the Future

is the theme of the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania Special Biennial Report, for 1996-1997. Composed in the twilight of the twentieth century, our report will introduce the reader to the various courts, divisions, judges, administrators, and support staff that comprise the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania, now more than 200 years old. For the first time in one report, FJD accessibility, progress, and productivity are measured by descriptive narrations, supportive statistics, and detailed graphs and charts. Text, photos, and illustrations provide insight into FJD cutting-edge technology, in-house training programs, committees, and expanded facilities. The Special Report's presentation of the Court's organizational structure, services, and links to allied agencies and other groups will demonstrate how closely aligned the District is with the theme of our report, Access to Justice.

One element of this introduction is to provide a historical perspective. Moreover, the concepts contained in the theme of our report — *Access, Justice, Foundation, and Future* - need to be defined for the purpose at hand, then interplayed in an historic context throughout the perspective. Toward that end, the following are provided:

- Access: easy to obtain; the right to enter, approach, or use.
- Justice: fairness; the use of authority to uphold what is right, just, or lawful.
- Foundation: establishing a supportive base with provisions for upkeep and maintenance.
- Future: time that is to come; what will be; the prospective condition of a person, place, or thing.

Now, with definitions in hand, please join us as we touch on an integral component of the historic overview of the FJD: The Judicial Reorganization Act of 1791.



## The Judicial Reorganization Act of 1791 3 Smith's Laws of Pennsylvania 28 (1791)

### Chapter MDCXIII

An ACT to establish the judicial courts of this  
commonwealth, in conformity to the alterations and  
amendments in the constitution.

*In establishing  
the five judicial  
districts, the  
Judicial  
Reorganization  
Act of 1791  
provided the  
footing for  
ACCESS.*

#### {Section II}

And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That in order to  
render effectual the provisions made in the said constitution for  
establishing the courts of common pleas, this commonwealth shall be  
and hereby is, divided into five districts, or circuits, to be limited as  
follows, that is to say; the first circuit to consist of the city and  
county of Philadelphia,.....}

#### {Section III}

And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That in and for  
each of the said districts, or circuits, a person of knowledge,  
integrity, and skilled in the laws, shall be appointed and  
commissioned by the governor, to be President and Judge of the  
courts of Common Pleas within such district .....; which said  
Presidents and Associate Judges shall have and execute all and  
singular the powers, jurisdictions and authorities of Judges of the  
Court of Common Pleas, Judges of the Courts of Oyer and  
Terminer and General Goal ( Jail ) Delibery, Judges of the  
Orphans' Courts, and Justices of the Courts of Quarter Sessions  
of the Peace, agreeably to the laws and constitution of the  
Commonwealth.}

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On the 13th day of April, 1791, an Act was passed in the Pennsylvania General assembly — 3 Smith's Laws 28 — which put effect on the judicial features of the 1790 Pennsylvania Constitution. The Act created five judicial districts by which all of the counties then in existence were divided. Prior to 1791, each county court consisted of a quorum of Justices of the Peace or Justices of the Court appointed for the county. The object of the creation of judicial districts, consisting of several counties each, was to provide courts with President Judges learned in the law without providing such Judges for each county. Although in existence since 1682, a President Judge was now required by the 1791 Reorganization Act to be a person of knowledge, integrity and skilled in the laws.

The five original districts created by the Act were the First Judicial District which included the populous eastern counties of Philadelphia, Montgomery, Bucks, and Delaware. The counties of Chester, Lancaster, York, and Dauphin went into the Second Judicial District. The large Third Judicial District in the north contained the counties of Berks, Northampton, Luzerne, and Northumberland. The Fourth Judicial District was composed of Cumberland, Franklin, Bedford, Huntington, and Mifflin counties. The Fifth Judicial District covered the western part of the Commonwealth and included the counties of Allegheny, Fayette, Washington, and Westmoreland.

Periodic journeys to county seats were necessary in discharging the official duties of the President Judges. These journeys were usually performed on horseback, over dangerous and difficult roads which were a haven for rogue indians, armed highwaymen,

insurgents, and rebel militia. During inclement weather, roads and trails were almost impassable. Often upon these perilous pilgrimages, a President Judge's escort included a group of lawyers. It was custom for many members of the bar of that period to accompany the courts upon their circuits. The Judges were looked upon as personages of great importance by the citizenry and holding court in the various counties was re-



A view of the Walnut Street Jail at 6th & Walnut, circa 1791; America's first modern penitentiary.

garded as a highly notable public event. Sheriffs, constables, and members of the public met the President Judge and his group as they approached the county seat. Seemingly an official parade or pageant, the true object of such a meeting was to provide safety to his Honor.

***The President Judges:*** to the First District, Honorable James Biddle; to the Second District, former Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice William Augustus Atlee; the Third District, former Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Jacob Rush; to the Fourth District, future Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Hon. Thomas Smith, and

to the Fifth District, Hon. Alexander Addison. These were all steadfast, eminent, and heroic men. The districts of Pennsylvania had a uniformly strong set of Presidents during this period, one which included one of the most stirring, dramatic, and glorious eras in American history.

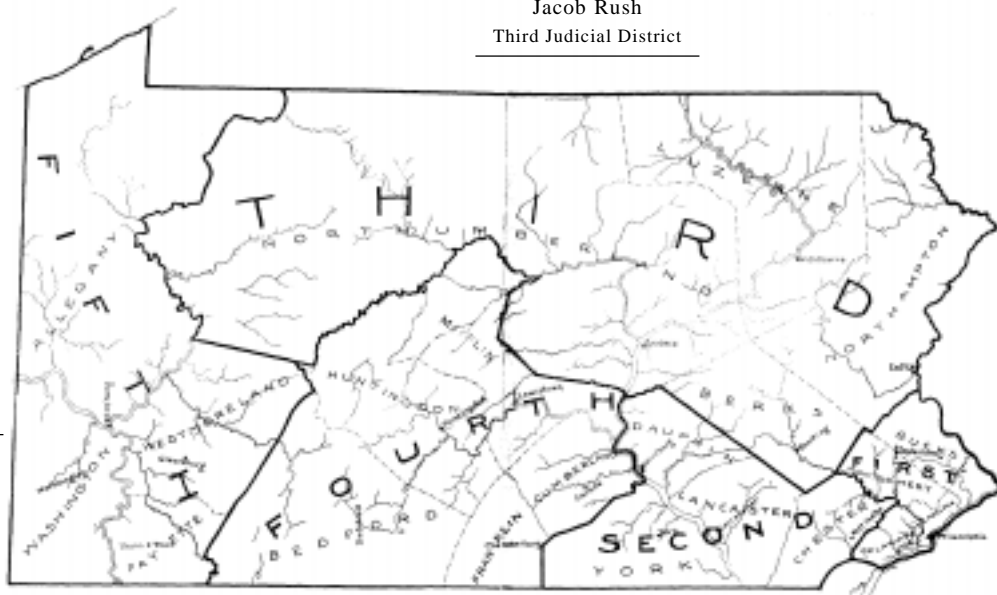
### Judicial Districts of Pennsylvania 1791



Jacob Rush  
Third Judicial District



Alexander Addison  
Fifth Judicial District



James Biddle  
First Judicial District



Thomas Smith  
Fourth Judicial District



William A. Atlee  
Second Judicial District

*\*The silhouettes of the President Judges were created from actual portraits. In place of Jacob Rush (portrait unavailable), we have inserted the silhouette of former Pennsylvania Supreme Court Chief Justice Benjamin Chew.*

President Judge James Biddle, a native Philadelphian of English descent, was born on February 18, 1731, and belonged to a very distinguished family of prominent Whigs during the Revolution. He studied law in the office of John Ross, then one of the foremost lawyers in the Province. He was admitted to the Philadelphia bar on April 18, 1765. In 1788 he was appointed Prothonotary for the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas and, later that year was commissioned one of the associate judges of that county. He was commissioned President Judge of the First Judicial District on September 1, 1791, and held that office until his death on January 14, 1797. President Judge Biddle was a vestryman of Christ Church in 1776 and led their resolution to omit prayers for the Crown of Great Britain from the liturgy.

President Judge William Augustus Atlee was also a native Philadelphian. Born on July 1, 1735, he later moved to Lancaster county where he read law with Edward Shippen, Esq. (future Chief Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court). Admitted to the bar on August 3, 1758, Justice Atlee served on the Pennsylvania Supreme Court from 1777 to 1791. Under the Reorganization Act, he was selected to head the court of the Second District. An avowed Constitutionalist, his burning patriotic views during the Revolutionary period earned him the name "savage Atlee". Also, it is actually written that Justice Atlee was probably the most handsome of the five new President Judges. Justice Atlee held the office of President Judge for the Second Judicial District until his death on September 9, 1793.



At far left, James Biddle's 1791 courthouse at Second and High (now Market) Street, with Christ Church in the background.

Appointed the first President Judge of the Third Judicial District, Jacob Rush was born November 24, 1747, in Philadelphia. He was a brother of Dr. Benjamin Rush, signer of the Declaration of Independence, eminent physician, and philanthropist. Jacob Rush graduated the College of New Jersey (Princeton University) in 1765 and later received the Doctor of Laws. He was admitted to the bar February 7, 1769, and served as member of the Supreme Bench of Pennsylvania from 1784 until his appointment to the Third District in 1791. He was later appointed, in 1806, the President Judge of the First Judicial District. Justice Rush was a man of great legal ability, firmness, character, and eloquence. He was a zealous patriot and ardent Federalist who promulgated his political views in charges to grand juries. Next in importance to his faith in Federalism, Justice Rush strongly believed in the

*The President Judges, all persons of wisdom and righteousness, and accomplished in the laws, were the epitome of the provision of JUSTICE.*





Philadelphia's State House; the seat of State and Federal Government in 1791.

maintenance of social order by the literal and rigid enforcement of laws against vice and immorality. By many he was regarded as a moral censor of the severest school. He was a terror to evildoers and was pointed in his concerns for the youth of the day. Under instructions from Justice Rush, little boys were arrested by constables for playing ball in the public streets on Sundays. Jacob Rush passed on January 5, 1820, his legacy permanently etched in legal decisions, published and unpublished legal opinions, papers, and literary essays.

Surveyor, pioneer, lawyer, Prothonotary, Recorder, Deputy Register of Wills, Member of the Assembly, and Justice of the Common Pleas, Thomas Smith of Bedford was appointed President Judge of the Fourth Judicial District in 1791. Born in Scotland in October, 1745, Justice Smith arrived in America in 1768. Here, he joined his

distinguished half-brother, William Smith, first Provost of the old College of Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania), in building a foundation for the Commonwealth's future. He was a Master in Land Law and foremost among Pennsylvania land lawyers. Thomas Smith was devoted to Dickinson College and was among the College's first trustees. He was also a member of both the Constitutional Convention and Continental Congress. In 1810, his nephew and former student, Charles Smith, was appointed editor of the Laws of Pennsylvania. His scholarly treatment of this appointment created Smith's Laws of Pennsylvania, a previously cited reference which, coincidentally, contains the Judicial Reorganization Act of 1791. President Judge Smith was commissioned Justice of the Supreme Court on January, 31, 1794, and served until his death on March 31, 1809.

Appointed to the Fifth Judicial District was the Honorable Alexander Addison. Born in Scotland in 1759 and educated at Aberdeen as a Presbyterian clergyman, Judge Addison was a preacher of liberal sentiment in the western Pennsylvania mountain region. This same sentiment may have given cause for his later impeachment. Alexander Addison studied law and was admitted to practice at the Washington county bar in 1787. He was the youngest of the newly appointed President Judges at age thirty-two. He was described by Thomas Smith as an example of diligence and perseverance, aided by proper education, strength of mind and prudent deportment. However, impeachments were the order of the times. Judges were proceeded against, not for high crimes and misdemeanors, but for alleged arbitrary

*President Judge  
Smith and his  
colleagues  
built the  
FOUNDATION  
for justice in  
Pennsylvania.*

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methods of administration. The popular jealousy of the life tenure of their appointments had much to do with the opposition to the judiciary as a class, independent of partisan considerations. President Judge Addison's bold stand, and published grand jury charges in favor of the Federal government during the Whiskey Insurrection, and his opposition to French emissaries and to secret political societies led to his impeachment and removal from office in 1803. President Judge Addison resumed his law practice in the Washington county area in 1804 until his death in 1807.

By virtue of their appointments, each of the five President Judges was also a member of the Pennsylvania High Court of Errors and Appeals. The Judicial Reorganization Act stated that the High Court of Errors and Appeals was also to include the four Pennsylv-

nia Supreme Court Justices: Chief Justice Thomas McKean, Justice William Bradford, Justice Edward Shippen, and Justice Jasper Yeates, three persons of known legal abilities (two of whom were apparently never appointed) which included the President of the Court, former Supreme Court Chief Justice Benjamin Chew. Created in 1780 and reorganized in 1791, the High Court of Error and Appeals had appellate jurisdiction over the Supreme Court itself, whose decisions it usually affirmed but only occasionally reversed. The High Court was abolished in 1806.

In the same year, the city and county of Philadelphia became the only division of the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania — 4 Smith's Laws of Pennsylvania 270 ( 1806) — where it has remained until the present.

*As the basis for ACCESS,  
led by learned and honorable President Judges  
to dispense JUSTICE and to guide others to do likewise,  
building the FOUNDATION for a fair and equitable system  
that evolved and memorialized judicial administration  
for the next two centuries, up to this day and into the FUTURE,  
the First Judicial District and the four 1791 contemporary districts,  
whose numbers have expanded to 60 today,  
are the real manifestation of:*

*Access to Justice: a Foundation for the Future*

### Summary of the Access to Justice Standards

Trial courts should be open and accessible. Because location, physical structure, procedures, and the responsiveness of its personnel affect accessibility, the five standards grouped under ACCESS TO JUSTICE require a trial court to eliminate unnecessary barriers to its services. Such barriers can be geographic, economic, and procedural. They can be caused by deficiencies in language and the knowledge of individuals participating in court proceedings. Additionally, psychological barriers can be created by mysterious, remote, unduly complicated, and intimidating court procedures.

The intent of the first two standards is to bring the administration of justice into the open and make it accessible. Standard 1.1 requires the trial court to conduct its business openly. To ensure that all persons with legitimate business before the court have access to its proceedings, Standard 1.2 requires the trial court to make its facilities safe, accessible, and convenient to use. Accessibility is required not only for those who are guided by an attorney but also for all litigants, jurors, victims, witnesses, and relatives of litigants. Access to trial courts is also required for many others—for example, beneficiaries of decedents in probate matters, parents and guardians in juvenile cases, persons seeking information from public records held by the court, employees of agencies that regularly do business with the courts (investigators, mental health professionals, sheriff's deputies, marshals, etc.), and the public.

Because a trial court may be accessible to most and still hinder access to some, Standard 1.3 requires the court to provide opportunities for the effective participation of all who appear before the court, including those with linguistic difficulties and handicaps. To promote access to justice and to enhance citizens' confidence and trust in the court, Standard 1.4 urges that all court personnel accord respect, courtesy, and dignity to all with whom they come into contact.

Standard 1.5 recognizes that there are financial and procedural barriers to access to justice. It requires that the fees imposed and procedures established by the court be fair and reasonable. Recognizing the importance of the relationship between public records and access to justice, the standard also requires that public records be preserved and made available at reasonable cost."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>From *Trial Court Performance Standards with Commentary*: Commission on Trial Court Performance Standards - A Project of the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice and the National Center for State Courts © 1990 by the National Center for State Courts.

*The Judges and Employees of the First Judicial District affirmatively endeavor, through their efforts toward achieving their individual and collective goals in the administration of justice, to foster the primacy of, and continually improve upon, ACCESS TO JUSTICE.*

Over the last two years, opportunities to broaden access to judicial proceedings and services have emerged at lightning pace. With the explosion of information delivery capabilities, and a resurgence of public interest in the business of the Courts, the First Judicial District continues to develop and erect platforms from which expanded information and other public service programs may be launched, allowing more people to participate — more effectively than ever before. Some of these prospective and very promising advancements are highlighted below.



Criminal Justice Center

***Opportunity: Continue to achieve better judicial administration through improvements in automation.***

***Trend:***

Sustained Rapid Improvement in desktop PC power.

***Response:***

Begun in an effort to provide office automation hardware and software to judicial chambers, courtrooms and administrative offices, the First Judicial District is completing installation and upgrades to its networked personal computer system. Hardware and software standards, refreshed twice yearly, evolve with ever changing demands for additional desktop processing power. The 50 server, 2,400 personal computer network distributed over 13 locations, is linked through a high speed wide area network.

***Opportunity: Help to provide employees with the means to reach their true potential and further improve access.***

***Trend:***

Judicial leadership and administrative support spark in-house training.

***Response:***

The Human Resources Department has developed and presented a series of in-house training programs for the employees of the First Judicial District including three important topics: 1) prevention of sexual harassment; 2) Windows and Word Perfect computer upgrades; and 3) Stress Management and other specially tailored courses. The goal is to help employees to be the best informed, most courteous employees in the State Court System.



***Opportunity:*** *Utilize more responsive information services to broaden access to the public.*

***Trend:***

Improved Automated Voice Response Systems — Judicial Leadership.

***Response:***

Through the guidance of the Office of the President Judge, implementation of an automated court information line (215-686-7000) expands access to the public. Callers are provided with general court information, in English or Spanish, and, through a series of menu choices, connected to the office that can best answer or resolve inquiries. The automated system capitalizes upon an existing voice mail system at no extra cost, and saves the First Judicial District many thousands of dollars of personnel time. More importantly, the information line provides twenty-four hour access to the court and its various departments.

***Opportunity:*** *Translate Internet capabilities into improved access for governmental agencies, private organizations, and the public.*

***Trend:***

Burgeoning power and popularity of the Internet, Judicial & Administrative leadership responsiveness.

***Response:***

In 1997, the First Judicial District Internet website was completed and online. Although currently consisting of static data regarding the operations of the district, the site's features are rich in information and dynamic in terms of navigation and linkage. Future avenues will lead to built-in website connectivity to selected court databases providing direct access to attorneys, governmental agencies and the public.

***Opportunity:*** *Improve communication and widen public access to justice through involvement of communities and victims as clients with interest and standing in the system.*

***Trend:***

Growing public concern over juvenile delinquency.

***Response:***

In 1996 Pennsylvania adopted a new approach to juvenile delinquency - the Balanced and Restorative Justice Model - in pursuit of three goals: 1) offender accountability to victims and communities; 2) public safety; and 3) development of competencies for juvenile offenders. State funding led the Family Division Juvenile Court to create the Victim and Community Services Program in 1997. The program works to restore victims and their neighborhoods through the imposition of restitution and community service. Also following from this trend: creation of School-Based Probation, Special Offenders, Firearms Violators, and Police-Probation Partnership Programs.



City Hall

*Opportunity: Through the application of modern case flow management principles eliminate backlogs and restore access.*

***Trend:***

Explosion of civil litigation in the 1980's.

***Response:***

The Trial Division Civil Section, in employing specialized Court facilities, tailored judicial assignments, and volunteer judges pro tempore with the Day Forward and Day Backward Programs eliminated backlogs and concomitant delay, providing improved access in a very real sense, to a broad spectrum of the citizenry with divergent interests.



Criminal Justice Center Courtroom

*Opportunity: Improve and expand services to families in time of need.*

***Trend:***

Reinvigorated concentration on family values and responsibilities.

***Response:***

The Family Division Domestic Relations Court Branch instituted several improvements to better utilize resources and upgrade service delivery including: 1) expansion of the Domestic Violence Unit; 2) establishment of the "643" Processing Unit to help families moving off welfare; 3) expansion of the Customer Services Unit; 4) change to less invasive techniques for paternity testing; and 5) establishment of the Custody Masters Unit to expedite processing of custody petitions.

*Opportunity: Redesign programs to respond to the needs of the populace.*

***Trend:***

Increasing accessibility needs of the general public and disabled community.

***Response:***

In the Municipal Court Civil Division the upper jurisdictional limit was raised to \$10,000 to allow greater access to Small Claims Court. Dispute Resolution allows for expedited agreement processes, and almost 1,600 Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodation requests were satisfied in 1996 and 1997. In the Criminal Division, Court services are available in the communities at Night Court, an Arbitration program settles community disputes, and Treatment Court deals with one of the underlying causes of criminal involvement: drug addiction.

***Opportunity: Address “Quality of Life” issues in the District’s high-volume Traffic Court.***

***Trend:***

As the average citizen’s first, and often only interaction with the justice system, high volume and public safety issues give rise to Traffic Court enhancements.

***Response:***

Enhanced access to the Court’s facilities is provided by accommodating the public with extended weekday hours and additional Saturday hours. Working strategies in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) like TDD phone systems for the hearing impaired afford citizens greater access. Customer service representatives provide information, receive payments (MAC and credit cards permitted), and help with hearing scheduling and assistance with license suspension. Work toward implementation of the “Boot and Tow” law proceeds to address public safety problems concerning unlicensed drivers and improperly registered autos.



City Hall Courtroom

***Opportunity: Safeguard the rights (access) of the misfortunate.***

***Trend:***

Increasing awareness of the population of incapacitated persons.

***Response:***

The Orphans’ Court Division of the Court of Common Pleas ensures the preservation of the rights of all parties before that Court — including those who temporarily or permanently may not be able to fully participate on their own behalf.

***Opportunity: Provide communities, victims, and defendants with greater numbers of more timely dispositions.***

***Trend:***

Completion of the Criminal Justice Center (CJC).

***Response:***

Since moving into the CJC just prior to the 1996-1997 Biennial Report period, the Trial Division Criminal Section reduced case inventory by approximately 1,000 cases utilizing case management initiatives.

*First Judicial District leaders and employees look forward to more outstanding achievements in the future. Listed below are a few of the FJD ACCESS objectives and goals for the future. The listed topics are highlights of some of the intended accomplishments and methods to achieve the aims.*

***Goal: Court data Internet availability.***

An Administration and Prothonotary sponsored program is to provide Internet access to Court data for a fee in 1998.

***Goal: Wipe out inventory of aged civil cases.***

The dedication of judges and employees and efficient case management are projected to result in the elimination of all Trial Division Civil Section Day Backward Program in 1998.

***Goal: Amass an even greater volume of more timely disposed criminal cases.***

Expansion of Differentiated Case Management techniques will result in their application to all Common Pleas criminal matters.

***Goal: Continue to improve child support services.***

During 1998 and into the future, the Family Division Domestic Relations Branch will continue to streamline and improve its existing processes, including the ongoing refinement and expansion of PARENTS, the Court's automated child support computer system. And, with an eye toward the future, the Branch has established a number of standing committees charged with evaluating new and existing processes and technologies.

***Goal: 1998 Implementation of Technological Initiatives***

With the enthusiastic support of judicial leaders and the Court Administrator, the Data Processing/MIS Department is working on myriad system upgrades and enhancements to the District computing and communications environment:

- imaging project for online web browser access to UCC filings and divorce decrees;
- email gateway to City of Philadelphia agencies;
- Internet access;
- expansion of Human Resources' "Remote Time and Attendance" reporting system;
- Adult Probation pilot case tracking project and expansion of the Pretrial online interview application;
- online archiving system for notes of testimony with new systems for tracking Court Reporter and Interpreter assignments;
- expansion of the network at 1801 Vine Street to push Juvenile Probation case management initiatives;
- attorney, government agency and public Internet access to civil records;
- Internet access to civil data and electronic filing.



## FJD Management

The centralized management infrastructure of the District was largely defined by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania in March of 1996 through an order made effective April 1, 1996 that established the Administrative Governing Board (AGB) — a group of judicial leaders with extensive responsibilities for overall management of the District. The board is aided by the FJD Court Administrator. The nine member AGB is made up of the three President and five Administrative Judges of the Common Pleas, Municipal, and Traffic Courts and the subdivisions that comprise them, with the ninth seat occupied by the State Court Administrator. Common Pleas and Municipal Court President Judges are elected by their peers and Administrative Judges are appointed by the Supreme Court. The President Judge of Traffic Court is appointed by the governor.

The Honorable Alex BonavitaCola, President Judge of the Court of Common Pleas was designated by the Supreme Court as chairperson of the AGB. The other members, and their respective positions are: 1) Municipal Court President Judge Alan K. Silberstein; 2) Traffic Court President Judge Frank Little; 3) Common Pleas Court Trial Division Administrative Judge John W. Herron; 4) Common Pleas Court Family Division Administrative Judge Paul P. Panepinto; 5) Common Pleas Court Orphans' Court Division Administrative Judge Petrese B. Tucker; 6) Municipal Court Administrative Judge Robert S. Blasi, 7) Traffic Court Administrative Judge Bernice DeAngelis, and 8) State Court Administrator Nancy Sobolevitch.

The Board meets regularly to consider, deliberate upon, and coordinate responses to broad management issues affecting all the FJD Courts. In addition, the AGB reviews data and entertains recommendations presented to initiate new projects to improve service delivery, including access to justice. This cross-court, District-wide arrangement facilitates collegiality and fosters communication among the component Courts and divisions of the District.



### **Alex Bonavitacola**

*President Judge, Court of Common Pleas  
Chair, Administrative Governing Board*

President Judge Alex Bonavitacola is a graduate of Temple University and Temple University School of Law (from which he earned his J.D. and LL.M. degrees). Judge Bonavitacola was elected Judge of the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas in 1973, retained in 1983 and 1993. He has served in the Trial Division, the Family Court Division and the Orphans' Court Division. The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania appointed him Administrative Judge of the Trial Division of the First Judicial District July 1, 1992, until December 1995, when he was unanimously elected by his colleagues as President Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia County.

He is Past President of the Pennsylvania Conference of State Trial Judges and served as Chairman of the Education Committee for three years.

During his tenure as Administrative Judge of the Trial Division, President Judge Bonavitacola implemented a novel and comprehensive civil case inventory reduction strategy (Day Backward/Day Forward Programs), which has received national recognition for the effective reduction of case backlog within the Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia County.

In late March, 1996, by order of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, President Judge Bonavitacola was appointed Chairman of the Governing Board of the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania. This Board is responsible for the day-to-day governance of Philadelphia's Common Pleas, Municipal and Traffic Courts.



### **Alan K. Silberstein**

*President Judge, Municipal Court*

Honorable Alan K. Silberstein has held the position of President Judge of Philadelphia Municipal Court since April 1998. Prior to the immediately preceding two-year period when President Judge Silberstein occupied the same office as Acting President Judge, he presided from the Municipal Bench for ten years, beginning his long career as a jurist in January 1976. In addition to his more than 20 years on the bench, President Judge Silberstein was Special Assistant Attorney General for the Department of Transportation, and a partner on the Herman, Bayer and Silberstein law firm. He began his practice as a sole practitioner in 1964.

Rounding out his professional life, the President Judge has maintained his commitment to the community through his dedication to the Northeast Community Center for Mental Health/Mental Retardation, acting at various times as Vice-President of the Board of Directors (current), President of the Board of Directors, and as a Member of the Board of Directors since November 1974. In addition he is a former member of the Board of Directors of the National Hemophilia Foundation and an active member of the National Conference of Metropolitan Courts; the American Judge's Association; the American Trial Lawyers' Association; the Temple University Law Alumni Association; the Philadelphia and Pennsylvania Bar Associations; the B'nai Brith — Justice Lodge; the Pannonia Beneficial Association; the Criminal Justice Coordinating Commission; the Commission on Judicial Selection and Retention; the Pennsylvania Bar Institute as a Lecturer on Eminent Domain; and the Advisory Committee of the Jenkins Memorial Law Library.



### **Frank J. Little**

*President Judge, Traffic Court*

President Judge Little took office on January 8, 1998. He began his judicial career December 21, 1989, serving as Educational Judge beginning in 1993 and Emergency Judge from 1997. A dedicated Public Official of Philadelphia, he presided as the Director of Archives 1985-1990, headed Warrant Departments at Traffic Court and conducted investigations at Municipal Court in Private Criminal Complaints. He was proprietor and C.E.O. of a Philadelphia based Contracting Company from 1965 to 1975. He is a graduate of Wilson Law College, Minor Judiciary Law Degree, Philadelphia Police Academy and the Pennsylvania Supreme Court Constable Program. Recipient of numerous community and press awards, Judge Little serves on the Boards of the Community Mental Health and Retardation Center. He is President of the Olney Betterment Alliance, Secretary of Lions International, Life Member of The Emerald Society and Board Member of the Korean-American Friendship Society.



**John W. Herron**

*Administrative Judge, Trial Division*

The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania designated Judge Herron as Administrative Judge of the Trial Division in January of 1996. Judge Herron was previously elected to the Court of Common Pleas in November 1986 and re-elected for a second ten year term in November 1997. He has served in the Criminal Division in the List Room Program and the Major Jury Program and thereafter was assigned to the Civil Division where he served as the Motion Court judge and one of the original team leaders in the Major Jury Day Backward Program.

Prior to his judicial service, Judge Herron practiced law for 18 years as a lawyer in private practice, as an Assistant District Attorney and subsequently Deputy District Attorney, and also as Chief Disciplinary Counsel for the Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court. During his tenure as a judge,

he has served on numerous committees and chaired the Accountability Committee as well as the Civil Management Committee. In addition to his frequent appearances as a lecturer and panelist in various continuing legal education programs, he has for several years taught courses in law school in both Professional Responsibility and Trial Advocacy.



**Paul P. Panepinto**

*Administrative Judge, Family Division*

Administrative Judge Paul P. Panepinto attended Villanova University and received his B.A. in Political Science in 1971, and M.A. in Political Science in 1979; he received his J.D. in 1976 from Widener University School of Law. Before being appointed to the bench of the Court of Common Pleas in June 1990, and elected in his own right in 1991, Judge Panepinto served in the Family Court Division as a Probation Officer, Intake Unit Attorney, and as a Juvenile Master. A member of numerous professional associations, Judge Panepinto serves as a Board Member of the Alumni Association of the Widener University School of Law, and was presented the Widener University School of Law Outstanding Alumni of the Year Award in October, 1994.

In April 1996, Judge Panepinto was appointed by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania to serve in his current position as Administrative Judge of the Family Court Division. Also, in 1996, Judge Panepinto was appointed by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania to the Domestic Relations Procedural Rules Committee and appointed by Governor Thomas J. Ridge to the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission of Pennsylvania. In 1997, Judge Panepinto was appointed by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania to the Pennsylvania Futures Commission on Justice in the 21st Century and appointed Chairman for Community Resources Committee by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Judge Panepinto is a member of the Roxborough Lodge Order of Sons of Italy and serves as a member of the Mayor's Cabinet for Children and Youth, as well as numerous other community groups and organizations.



**Petrese B. Tucker**

*Administrative Judge, Orphans' Court*

Appointed by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court as Administrative Judge of the Orphans' Court Division of the Court of Common Pleas in April 1996, the Honorable Petrese B. Tucker originally assumed office April 6, 1987, and was subsequently elected to a ten year term in 1989. During her tenure in the Common Pleas Court, she has also served in the Juvenile Court Branch of the Family Division and the Criminal and Civil Sections of the Trial Division.

Before her appointment to the Bench, Judge Tucker was Assistant Chief of the Rape Unit and Assistant Chief of the Child Abuse Unit of the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office. In addition, her prior work experience includes positions as Senior Trial Attorney for the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), and Adjunct Professorships at the Great Lakes College Association and Trial Advocacy Courses at Temple University School of Law. Judge Tucker is a Member of the Barristers Association of Philadelphia, the Pennsylvania Confer-

ence of State Trial Judges, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, and the Judicial Council of the National Bar Association. As a member of the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, National, and American Bar Associations, Judge Tucker has chaired and worked on numerous committees. She has received many meritorious distinguished service awards for her significant contributions to the community.



**Robert S. Blasi**

*Administrative Judge, Municipal Court*

The Honorable Robert S. Blasi was appointed by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania to his current leadership position as Administrative Judge of the Philadelphia Municipal Court in October, 1997. He is concurrently qualified to preside as a Common Pleas Court Judge for Civil Appeals from Municipal Court decisions, having been vested with that power through appointment by the Common Pleas Court President Judge Alex Bonavita. Having been originally appointed as a Municipal Court Judge in January 1992, Administrative Judge Blasi was reelected to the bench in January 1998. The Administrative Judge's background includes positions with an engineering firm; Board Member, Vice Chairman, and Acting Chairman of the Philadelphia Zoning Board of Adjustment; and as a sole practitioner.

Judge Blasi adds dimension to his career as a lawyer and jurist through professional associations including his membership with the Philadelphia Bar Association and contributions to that institution through his work with the Real Property Committee, the Senior Citizens Judicare Project, the Lawyer Referral Service, and the Fee Disputes Committee. He is also a member of the Lawyer Club of Philadelphia, sits on the Board of Governors of the Justinian Society; and acts as the Director of the Widener University School of Law Alumni Association.

Judge Blasi's commitment to the community is reflected in his support of the Sons of Italy No. 2217 Greater Roxborough Lodge, where he has served as the President, Vice President, and Trustee. In addition, he has experience as the Past Director of the Rosary Federal Credit Union, a 4<sup>th</sup> Degree Member of the Knights of Columbus, a past member of the Pennsylvania Commission for Social Justice, Governor Casey's appointee to the Advisory Council on Drug and Alcohol Abuse, a Guest Lecturer at Holy Family College, and a member of the Philadelphia Federal Credit Union Loan Review Committee. Finally, Administrative Judge Blasi has received numerous awards for his dedication and public service from the Sons of Italy, Widener University School of Law, the 21<sup>st</sup> Ward Veterans' Organizations, and the Sons of Italy in America.



**Bernice A. DeAngelis**

*Administrative Judge, Traffic Court*

The Honorable Bernice Ann DeAngelis was appointed by Supreme Court of Pennsylvania as Administrative Judge of the Philadelphia Traffic Court in May 1996. She began her career on the Traffic Court Bench after winning a 1991 City-wide election to that post, assuming office in January 1992.

Prior to her election, Administrative Judge DeAngelis was employed in a State Senatorial District Office for almost 15 years, providing valuable assistance to a Senator who served as Majority/Minority Chairman of the Transportation Committee, specializing in constituent services relative to the Department of Motor Vehicles. She is an Associate Member of the American Bar Association, and a Member of the Democratic Women of Philadelphia. Relying on her rich Polish heritage and deep ties with the Fairmount community, Judge DeAngelis has devoted much time and energy to the betterment

of Philadelphia. She has received numerous accolades for her dedication and hard work benefitting the City and its citizens, enhancing public safety, and improving the quality of life for the public.



**Nancy M. Sobolevitch**

*Court Administrator of Pennsylvania*

Nancy M. Sobolevitch was appointed State Court Administrator of Pennsylvania on March 31, 1986. Prior to beginning her service as State Court Administrator, Ms. Sobolevitch held positions that included a posting as Deputy Director of the Governors's Energy Council of Pennsylvania, and an assignment as Executive Assistant to the Speaker, in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

Augmenting her valuable previous experiences, and, along with myriad achievements during her career as State Court Administrator, Ms. Sobolevitch has maintained professional associations as a member and Immediate Past President of the Conference Of State Court Administrators (COSCA); Board of the National Center for State Courts; Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency; Pennsylvania Association of Court Management (PACM); COSCA Committee on Court Technology; National Association of Women

Judges; American Judges Association; Chairperson, COSCA Committee on State-Federal Issues; Secretary, Judicial Council of Pennsylvania; Chair of the Budget Committee, Judicial Council of Pennsylvania; and National Center for State Courts Governance and Nominations Committee.



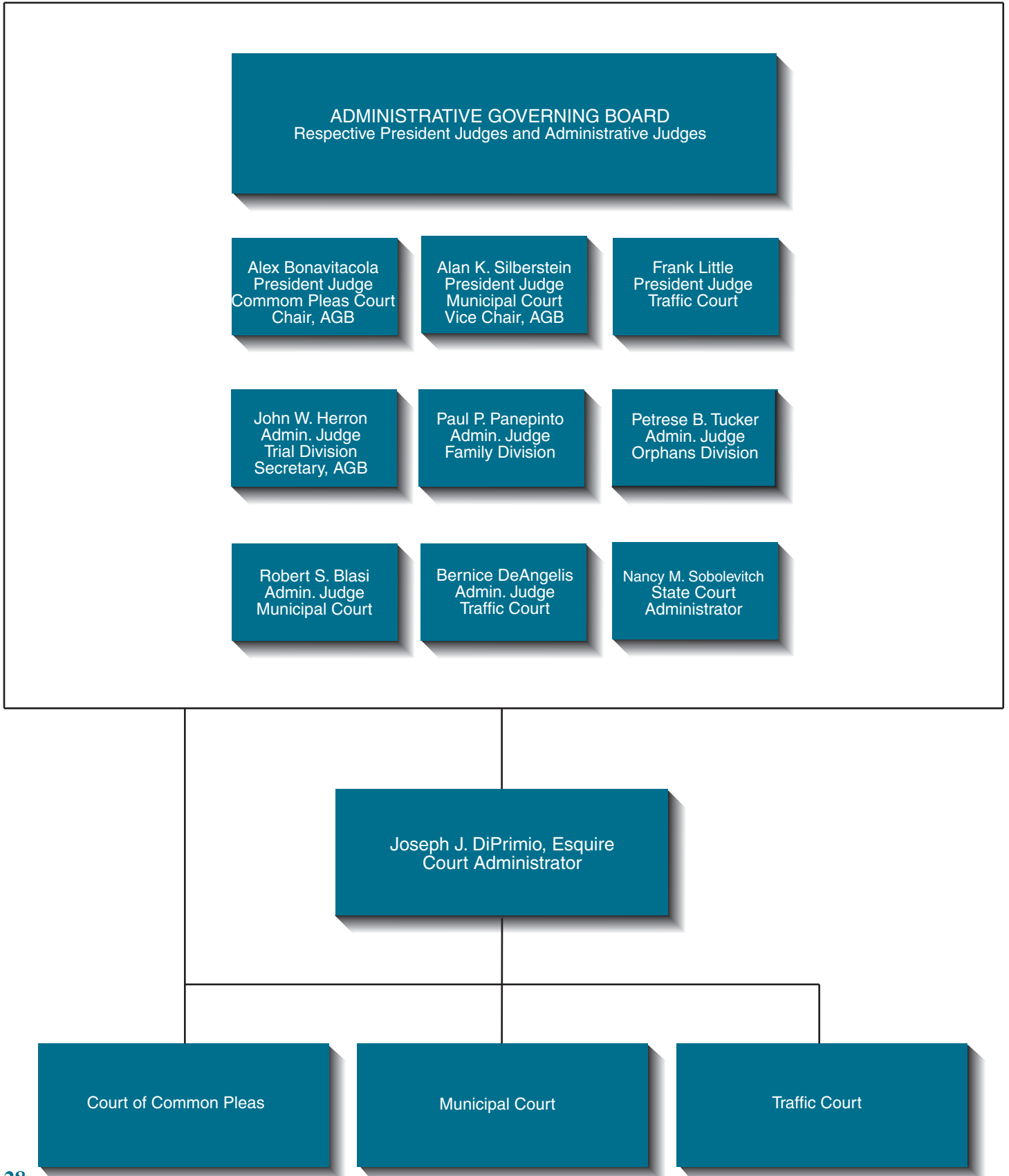
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### OVERVIEW

The First Judicial District of Pennsylvania (FJD) was initially established in 1791 as one of an original five state court jurisdictions in Pennsylvania. Today, on the verge of the millennium, FJD judges and employees exemplify leadership in their commitment to providing equal justice before the law. The FJD is one of sixty dynamic and progressive judicial districts in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The organizational structure of the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania is founded on the three major Courts that comprise it: 1) the Court of Common Pleas; 2) the Philadelphia Municipal Court; and 3) the Philadelphia Traffic Court.

The Common Pleas Court, a Court of general jurisdiction, is subdivided into three divisions: 1) the Trial Division with Civil and Criminal Sections; 2) the Family Division with constituent Domestic Relations and Family Branches; and 3) the Orphans' Court Division.

The Philadelphia Municipal Court is a limited jurisdiction special Court of record that is further delineated into Civil and Criminal Sections that parallel and are linked to their counterpart divisional components in the Trial Division of Common Pleas Court through appellate processes and the criminal arraignment and preliminary hearing procedures.

The Philadelphia Traffic Court is a special Court with jurisdiction over violations of the Pennsylvania Motor Vehicle Code.

### MANAGEMENT

The top echelon of FJD management is composed of Court leaders on the nine-member Administrative Governing Board (AGB) that was created by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in 1996. As described previously, the President Judges of the

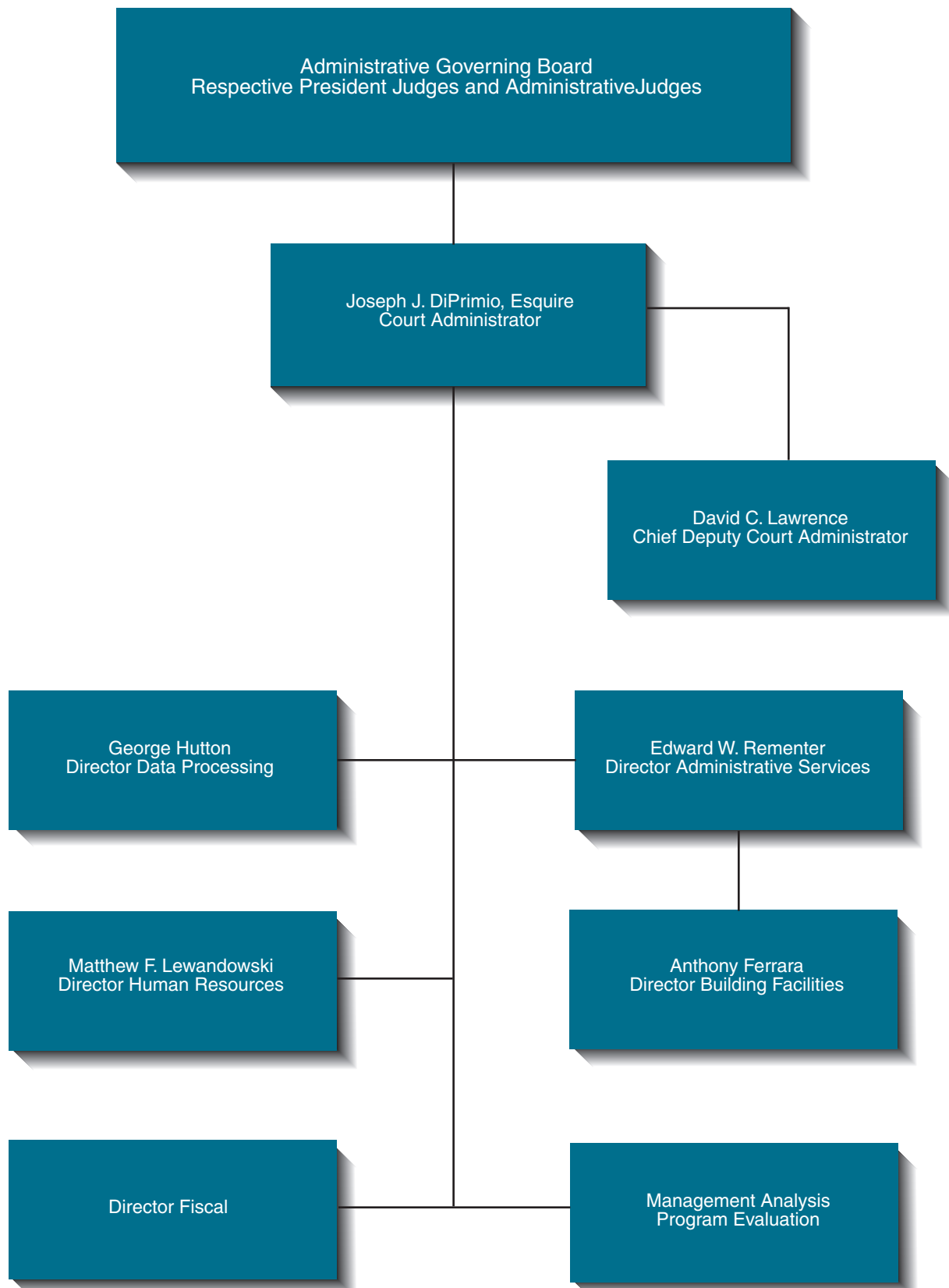
three major courts and the administrative judges of those courts and their subdivisions, along with the State Court Administrator constitute the membership of the AGB.

In addition to the formation of the AGB, the Office of the Court Administrator of the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania was also established by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court on April 1, 1996. The Court Administrator, Joseph J. DiPrimio, Esquire, was appointed to that position in August, 1996. Reporting directly to the AGB, Mr. DiPrimio oversees an office with large responsibility centers with bearing across the FJD.

### OPERATIONAL LINKAGES

Aside from the managerial links established through the AGB structure and augmented by the Office of the Court Administrator, several operational ties connect the three Courts. Criminal case arraignment and preliminary hearing processes conducted in Municipal Court lead to trial proceedings in the Common Pleas Court Trial Division Criminal Section. Common Pleas Court also entertains appeals arising from Municipal Court dispositions and Traffic Court decisions. When juvenile complainants are involved, felony preliminary hearings and misdemeanor trials are specially administered in the Juvenile Branch facility at 1801 Vine Street before Family Court Division judges. Further, the Family Division Domestic Relations Branch of the Common Pleas Court and the Municipal Court are joined through cooperative round-the-clock efforts to provide protection from abuse.

The district-wide influence of units in the Common Pleas Court President Judge's Office, and that of the Court Administrator, add to a network of connections spanning the FJD.





Joseph J. DiPrimio, Esq.  
Court Administrator



David C. Lawrence  
Chief Deputy  
Court Administrator

*The numerous achievements attained here during the biennium will have far reaching, long term effects on the efficient administration of justice in the First Judicial District.*

## ORGANIZATION

The Office of the Court Administrator of the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania was established by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court on April 1, 1996. Joseph J. DiPrimio, Esquire was appointed to that position in August 1996, and reports directly to the core leadership contingent of the First Judicial District — the Administrative Governing Board (AGB). In turn, the Chief Deputy Court Administrator, David C. Lawrence, reports to Mr. DiPrimio. The Court Administrator's office is organized into large responsibility centers each headed by a Deputy Court Administrator or Director.

## PURPOSE

As chief ministerial agent for the FJD, the Court Administrator is charged with implementing initiatives and programs responsive to the management needs of the AGB, while affirmatively proceeding as an executive with a vision toward the future.

Toward that end, the Court Administrator has adopted a strong leadership role that reflects a total quality management approach. In this instance, the Court Administrator facilitates periodic meetings between staff with like interests and functions to discuss solutions to problems and devise well-organized, innovative improvements to the District's working environment and service delivery systems.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

Given that the Administrator's purview extends to programs and services spanning the Courts and Divisions of the District, and, following from the direct link to the AGB, this office has the highest level of responsibility among non-judicial leadership positions. The numerous

achievements attained here during the biennium will have far reaching, long term effects on the efficient administration of justice in the First Judicial District. The Office of the Court Administrator is responsible for all central services of the First Judicial District including data processing technology, telecommunications, human resources management, fiscal concerns, facilities management, and management analysis and evaluation services.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

The 1996-1997 biennium featured dozens of accomplishments and new developments initiated through the auspices of the Court Administrator's office. Some of these are spotlighted below.

**Internet** - In 1997, the First Judicial District announced that its Internet website was completed and online. Although currently consisting of static data describing District operations, site features are rich in information and dynamic in terms of navigation and linkage. Future avenues will lead to built-in website connectivity to selected court databases providing direct access for attorneys, governmental agencies and the public.

**Technological Initiatives** - The Data Processing/MIS Department is currently working on the following system upgrades and enhancements to the First Judicial District computing and communications environment:

- A pilot imaging project will provide online access through a web browser to Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) filings and divorce decrees.
- An email gateway to the City of Philadelphia is planned to allow court network users to exchange e-mail with City agencies with Internet e-mail to court employees.



*Relocations from leased office space to City owned office space save the Court, City and citizens of Philadelphia approximately \$290,000 annually.*

- Internet access through the City of Philadelphia is being tested and should be available to authorized personnel in 1998.
- Human Resources will continue expansion of the "Remote Time and Attendance" reporting system.
- Implementation of the Adult Probation pilot case tracking project is expected along with expansion of the Pretrial online interview application.
- Leaders are developing an online archiving system for notes of testimony along with new systems for tracking Court Reporter and Interpreter assignments and notes of testimony.
- The Court network at 1801 Vine Street will undergo major improvements to push new Juvenile Probation case management initiatives.
- Bids are being reviewed to provide attorneys, government agencies and the public access to public civil records through an Internet Connectivity Project. Issues of security still remain but the First Judicial District will provide Internet access to its civil data through the Internet during 1998. Future trends in this area include electronic filing.

***Streamlined Fiscal Operations:***

Through computer technology, the Fiscal Unit has implemented several automated report processes which have allowed for streamlined operations, online budget management reports, and budget and expenditure modeling for court administration.

*The 1996-1997 biennium featured dozens of accomplishments and new developments initiated through the auspices of the Court Administrator's Office.*

***In-House Training:*** The Human Resources Department has developed and presented a series of in-house training programs for the employees of the First Judicial District. Training will continue to be developed to provide new and innovative programs. The series included three important topics: 1) prevention of sexual harassment; 2) Windows and Word Perfect computer upgrades; and 3) Stress Management and other personal improvement courses. The aim is to enable District employees to reach their full potential as individuals and as contributing members of the FJD workforce. The eventual goal is to help employees to be the best informed, most courteous employees in the State Court System.

***Space and Facilities Upgrades:*** In the past two years, major renovation projects included construction of the City Hall Civil Case Management Conference Center, the Dispute Resolution Center, the Bar Conference Center, and new offices for Court Data Processing, and the Court Fiscal Office. The Family Court building housing the Juvenile Branch operations underwent extensive refurbishment. Ongoing projects include new offices for Human Resources and a Municipal Court Senior Judges Complex.

Relocations from leased office space to City owned office space save the Court, City and citizens of Philadelphia approximately \$290,000 annually.

***Evaluative Services Projects:*** In the past few years Senior Staff Advisors to the Court Administrator's Office helped effectuate organizational improvements such as:

- electronic budget preparation and submission;
- technology needs assessment and equipment acquisition;
- online time and attendance system;
- the review and restructure of the civil fee system;
- electronic imaging of appropriate court records;
- development and implementation of the Philadelphia Courts Internet site;
- the creation of *The Courterly*, the FJD's first district-wide newsletter; and
- publication, for the first time in the history of the District, a comprehensive report describing all the constituent Courts and Divisions of the First Judicial District — the Special 1996-1997 Biennial Report in which this text appears.

In addition, the advisors have been or are otherwise presently involved with evaluative projects at Traffic Court; with the Court Reporters/Interpreters; with the Juvenile Branch of Family Court; evaluating the need for a new electronic criminal case management program and jury management system; expanding the Court's Internet connectivity to include live interaction with the civil database and, in cooperation with the Prothonotary, future electronic filing with electronic commerce.

## DEPARTMENTS

**Data Processing And Technology:** With the support and encouragement of judicial leaders, administrators of the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania have adopted an aggressive approach to providing improved technological management and operational tools to the judiciary, adminis-

tration and staff — with broad access by other governmental agencies, private organizations and the public. The strategy is framed by the structured integration of the mainframe platforms with desktop PC's operating over a wide area network with Internet communications capability. While the primary focus is to provide technology and communications within the First Judicial District, the leadership is mindful that the District is an integral part of larger judicial and governmental communities; and, therefore, must maintain communications with state and federal agencies as well as private, judicial, legal and educational groups.

Managed by George Hutton, the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania Data Processing/MIS Department includes a staff of approximately 50 supervisors, programmers, systems experts supervisors, technicians and clerical employees. Data Processing/MIS operates three main computer centers driving Court automation. An IBM ES9000 located in the Criminal Justice Center supports the Civil Division of Municipal Court, the Criminal operations of Common Pleas and Municipal Courts, Adult Probation and Parole, the Juvenile Branch of Family Division, Jury Selection, and Orphans Court. An IBM ES9000 running the software application "PARENTS" is an important component of the very successful Child Support collections programs and other activities at the Domestic Relations Branch of the Family Division of Common Pleas Court at 34 South 11<sup>th</sup> Street. Finally, an IBM RISC System/6000 operating the "BANNER for Courts" software package bolsters continually improving case management systems and inventory programs of the Civil Division of Common Pleas Court at City Hall.

*"The aim [of the training programs] is to enable District employees to reach their full potential as individuals and as contributing members of the FJD workforce."*

Additionally, the First Judicial District is completing installation and upgrades to the networked personal computer system. Network installation began in an effort to provide office automation hardware and software to judicial chambers, courtrooms and administrative offices. Hardware and software standards are reviewed and revised twice a year to keep current with the ever changing demands for additional desktop processing power. The network currently has 50 servers and approximately 2,400 personal computers distributed over 13 locations. All sites are linked over T1 circuits through CityNet, the City of Philadelphia's high speed wide area network.

The FJD Internet site and operation is managed by Internet Administrator Donald A. Varley Jr. who is responsible for maintaining and advancing the technical infrastructure behind the First Judicial District's Internet environment. In conjunction with Court leaders, he works with a variety of constantly changing leading edge technologies. While monitoring technical changes and advances in the Internet environment, stewardship of the site requires ongoing design of elements to enhance navigation, boost traffic and enrich content. The Internet Administrator collaborates with the MIS department regarding Internet configuration issues.



Wanamaker Building

**Fiscal Administration:** The Court Budget and Fiscal Office, formerly overseen by William Bell, is responsible for First Judicial District budget preparation, submission and management. Also, fiscal administration conducts all aspects of payment processing for certain contractual services including compensation for transcription services of more than 100 court reporters, interpreter services, and payment of millions of dollars to hundreds of Court appointed private attorneys providing legal counsel to thousands indigent defendants per year. In this manner, employees of the Fiscal Office bolster these services that are basic foundations for Access to Justice. In addition, the Fiscal Unit is responsible for management of financial grants for all divisions of the First Judicial District — except Child Support — including structuring accounts and assuring the proper accounting of grant

transactions. Finally, during the biennium, the Fiscal Unit processed the First Judicial District payroll including all record keeping and check distribution to a considerable population of more than 2,300 employees.

**Human Resources Management:** Management of personnel resources within the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania is the responsibility of the Human Resources Department directed by Matthew F.

Lewandowski. This unit maintains personnel records and employment histories for employees of the District. In addition to their responsibility for the proper administration of personnel transactions — from recruiting, testing and hiring to separation — the unit is dutiful in the uniform application of official personnel regulations and policies within the FJD.

A very important aspect of the work conducted by Human Resources is employee training and education. The programs coordinated here provide a variety of training options including in-service programs and training conducted by the City of Philadelphia, as well as educational programs offered through colleges and universities and professional associations. Additionally, the Human Resources Unit coordinates the employee performance appraisal system and administers the compensation and benefit program for District employees.

Concerning labor relations, HR management and staff serve to advise administrators throughout the FJD regarding personnel activities. They also oversee the grievance process and work to ensure compliance with appropriate federal, state and local employment laws and regulations including the Family Medical Leave Act (FLMA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Human Resources Department has maintained a position at the forefront of compliance efforts serving to broaden accessibility.

In an effort to streamline personnel operations throughout the District and its many locations, the Human Resources Unit along with Data Processing/MIS began implementing ABRA, an online time and attendance system. This system permits time and attendance recording at remote locations in the District and

provides for real time updating of the central personnel database. Once implementation of the system is complete, information will be immediately available to District administrators.

In compliance with Federal Laws, and, as one component of a diverse educational effort, the District Human Resources Department has developed a Sexual Harassment Prevention Program. Completion of this program is mandatory for every full and part-time, permanent and temporary employee. To date over 2,000 employees have benefitted from this course. The Sexual Harassment Prevention training program was developed at two levels. The first, for the education of Managers and Supervisors includes a review of the laws and procedural information regarding the responsibilities placed upon managers when sexual harassment is alleged. The second level, directed to all staff, clearly sets forth the criteria for identifying sexual harassment and the internal procedures available for the registration of a complaint. New employees are scheduled for Sexual Harassment Prevention Training within a month of their starting date.

Concerning technological advances, the Human Resources Department, in conjunction with the office of Managed Information Systems, conducted “Training for Trainers” sessions. The newly recruited instructors subsequently conducted other sessions and will provide a continuing resource for the future as the District continues to “roll out” participation in the use of Word Perfect 6.1 for Windows District-wide. This program has been very successful from several standpoints. First, individuals who were selected to be trainers are qualified volunteers whose selection was based in part on their knowledge and availability. In addition, peer training allowed the trainees to ask their own colleagues questions in a

friendly setting. Peer trainers were, in most cases, familiar with the demands placed on the trainee and the nature of the students' work — enabling them to gear the courses to meet specific needs.

Other initiatives include: Stress Management courses attended by 1,000 court employees at both supervisory and staff levels; English usage and grammar classes presented for a group of 20 employees as a test project; and in the interest of safety, members of the maintenance department and messenger staff received training in Back Injury Prevention.

**General Administrative Support:** Under the direction of Edward Rementer, the Administrative Services unit provides a variety of services throughout the First Judicial District. One of the primary areas of concentration for Administrative Services is maintenance and facility management. With many court locations throughout central Philadelphia, coordination of maintenance, renovation and construction projects, and cleaning services is a complicated task.

Administrative Services also provides planning, requisition processing, and liaison services with City Communications Department for the telecommunications requirements of the Court. In addition to the installation and maintenance of telephone equipment, Administrative Services coordinated installation of a comprehensive Automated Voice Response (AVR) system for the district. The AVR features a greeting and information section (English and Spanish), a call director, and a dial-out system to judges and administrators for emergency court information.

Under Administrative Services, professional offset printing and publishing services are channeled through the Court Print Shop. The Microfilm Unit provides complete filming, developing and computerized access for court records.

**Management Analysis and Program Evaluation:** The Court Administrator's Office supports the operations of the First Judicial District by providing a core staff of Senior Staff Advisors with specific program expertise who are responsible for management analysis functions and program evaluation activities. This staff coordinates projects to evaluate and improve the organizational design and operational process of all Court functions.

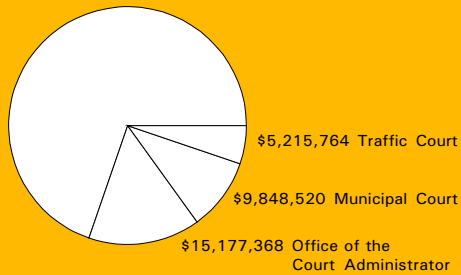


View of City Hall tower looking northeast.



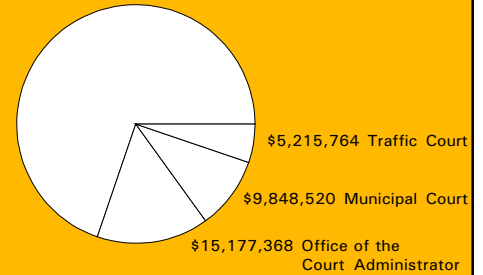
### FY96 First Judicial District Budget Appropriation

\$69,729,112 Court of Common Pleas



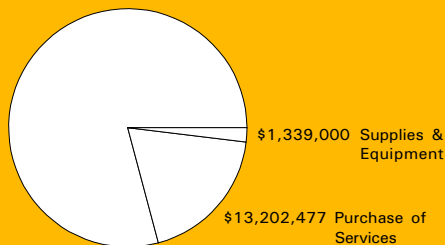
### FY97 First Judicial District Budget Appropriation

\$69,729,112 Court of Common Pleas



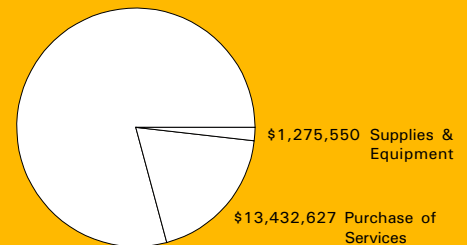
### FY96 Court of Common Pleas Budget Appropriation

\$55,187,635 Personnel



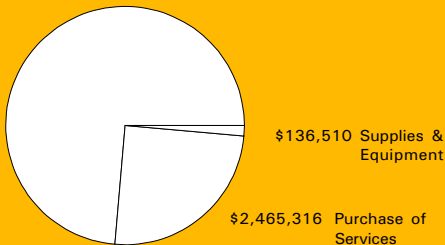
### FY97 Court of Common Pleas Budget Appropriation

\$55,967,081 Personnel



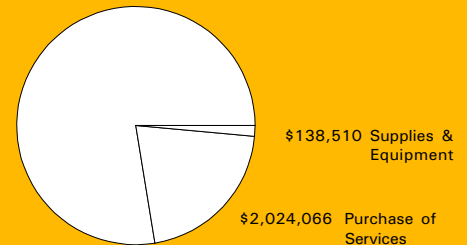
### FY96 Municipal Court Budget Appropriation

\$7,246,694 Personnel



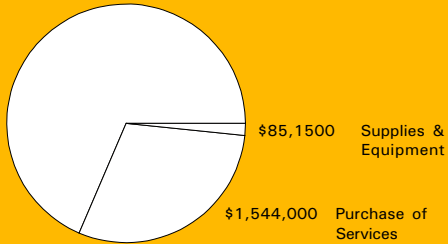
### FY97 Municipal Court Budget Appropriation

\$7,472,271 Personnel



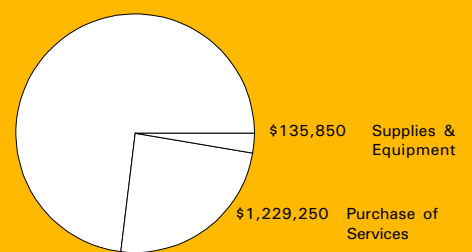
**FY96 Traffic Court  
Budget Appropriation**

\$3,576,614 Personnel



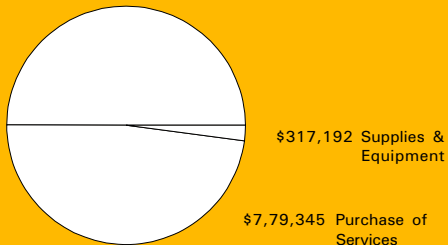
**FY97 Traffic Court  
Budget Appropriation**

\$3,706,433 Personnel



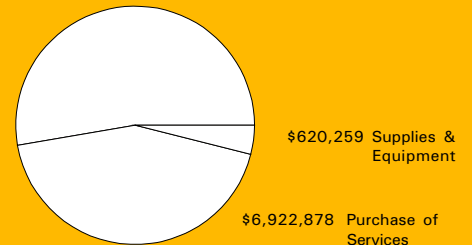
**FY96 Office of the Court Administrator  
Budget Appropriation**

\$7,580,831 Personnel



**FY97 Office of the Court Administrator  
Budget Appropriation**

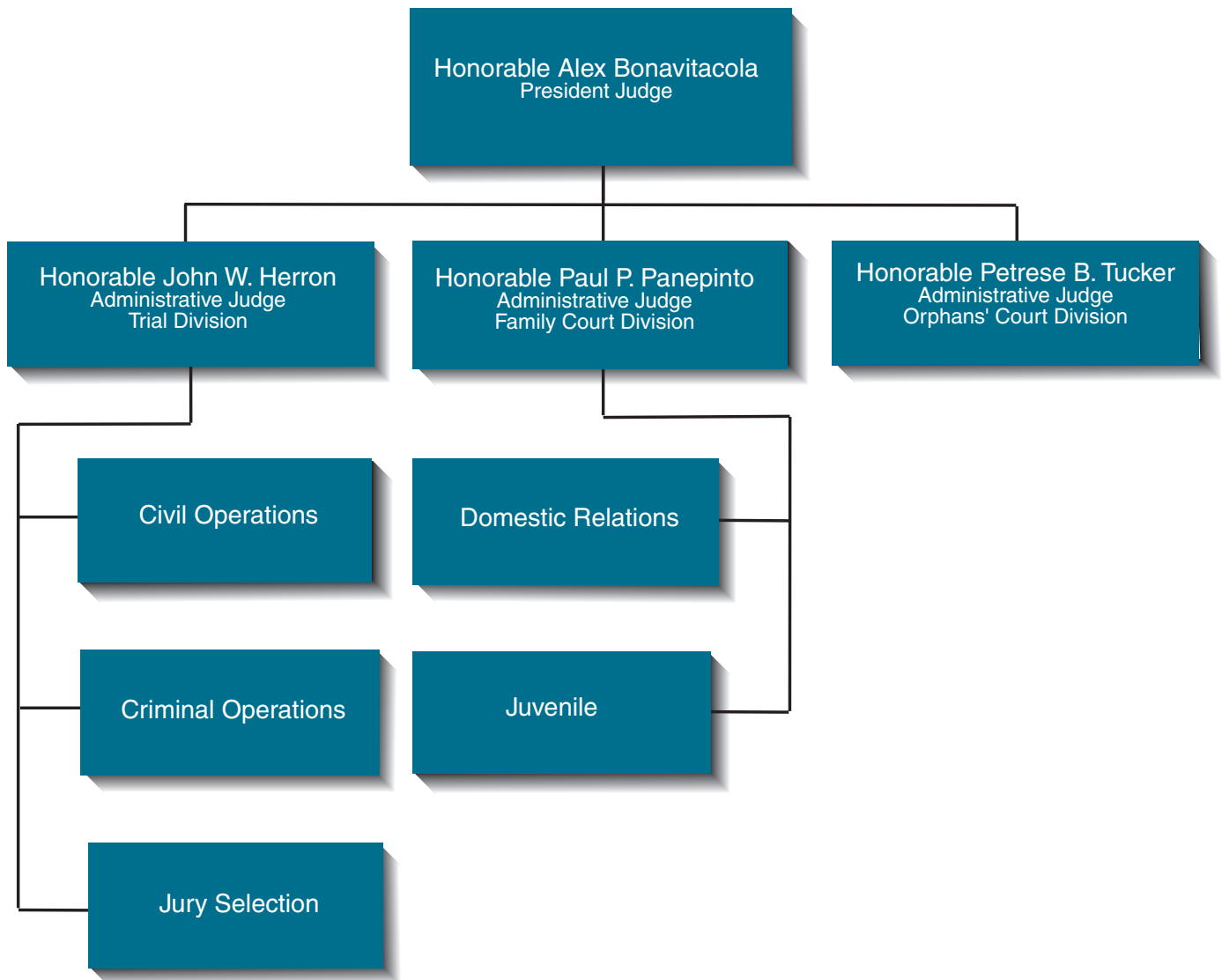
\$8,401,804 Personnel



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### OVERVIEW

The Courts of Common Pleas are Pennsylvania's courts of general trial jurisdiction. They have existed since the colonial charter of Pennsylvania, and are incorporated in the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776. The Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia County is comprised of three divisions, each of which is administered by an Administrative Judge appointed by the Supreme Court. The divisions and their corresponding compliment of judges are the Trial Division — 67, the Family Court Division — 20, and the Orphans' Court Division — 3.



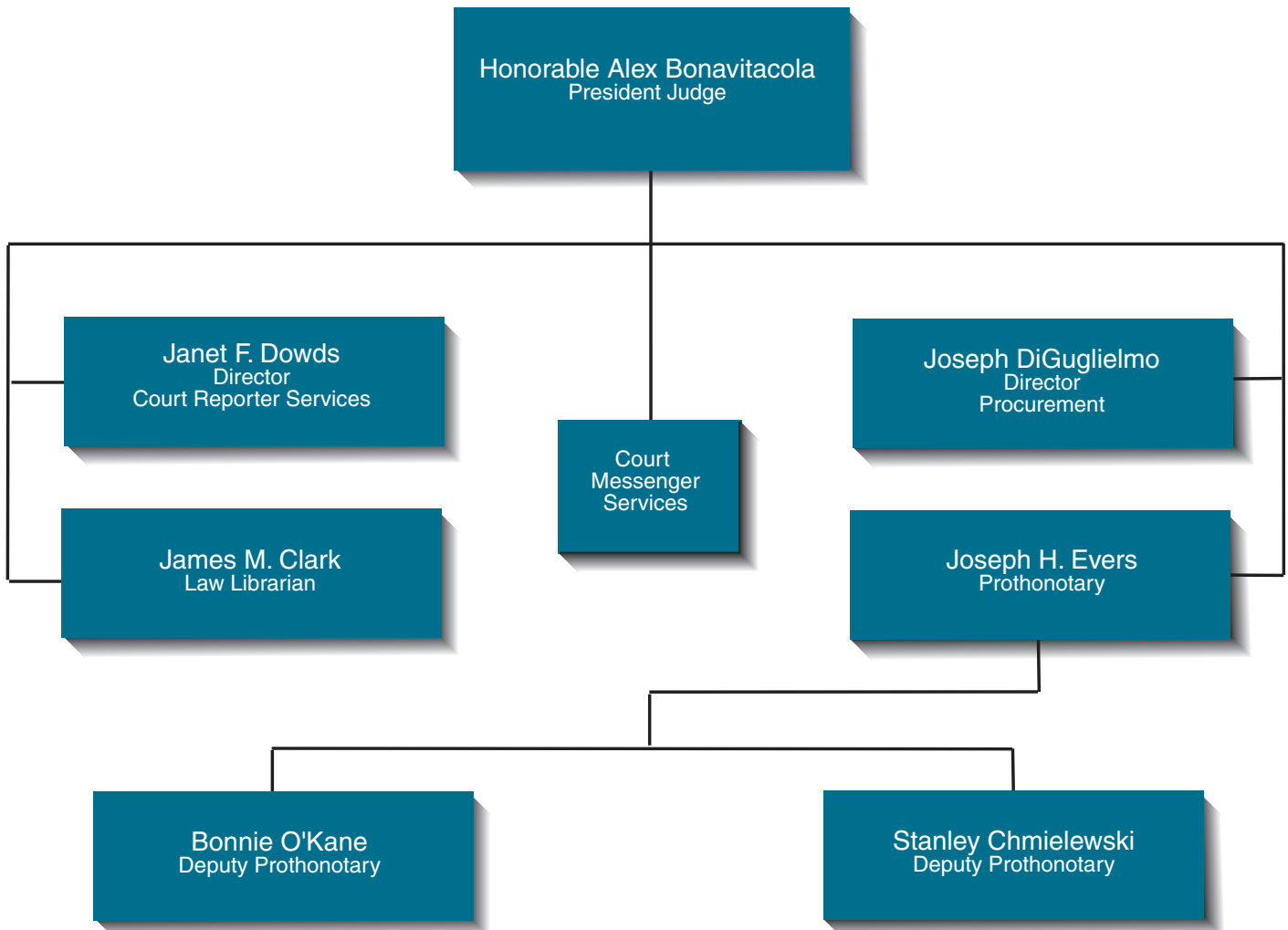
Criminal Justice Center  
Filbert Street entrance.

The current structure of the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas was established by a 1968 amendment to the Constitution of 1874. By this amendment, the Court was organized into Divisions: the Trial Division handles criminal and civil cases; the Orphan's Court Division is responsible for estate and probate matters; and the Family Division has jurisdiction in domestic relations, adoptions, and juvenile cases.

The Court of Common Pleas is headed by the President Judge. The biennium President Judge, Alex BonavitaCola, is also chairperson of the Administrative Governing Board, the upper-most level of the management structure of the First Judicial District.

The Common Pleas Court employs more than 2,150 people, more than any other court of the District. The Common Pleas judiciary, at 90 strong, accounts for most (more than 70%) of all the judgeships in the FJD. During the 1996-1997 Biennial Report period employees received and processed in excess of 280,000 new filings. The vast and comprehensive Common Pleas Court jurisdiction includes: Domestic Relations cases — Divorce, Custody, Child and Spousal Support, and Protection from Abuse; Juvenile cases — Delinquency, Dependency, and Adoptions; Criminal cases — homicide and felony trials, appeals from Municipal Court, Post Conviction Relief Act (PCRA) collateral appeals, probation violations, and others cases arising from criminal prosecution; all manner of Civil proceedings where amounts in question exceed \$10,000; and Orphans' Court estate and probate cases. Most of the business of the FJD is conducted in the Court of Common Pleas.







Alex Bonavitacola  
President Judge

## PURPOSE

The massive Court of Common Pleas of the First Judicial District is supervised by a President Judge who is elected for a five-year term by the judges of that Court.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

The President Judge wields considerable authority with extensive, myriad, and diverse responsibilities. As the leader of the largest court in the First Judicial District (FJD) and the Commonwealth, the President Judge of the Court of Common Pleas is charged with extraordinary and comprehensive duties and obligations. The biennium President Judge, Alex Bonavitacola, is also chair of the FJD Administrative Governing Board, the District's core management leadership group. With this dual role, President Judge Bonavitacola exemplifies the highest caliber of leadership, at the highest level, in fulfilling the description of President Judges contained in the 200-year-old Judicial Reorganization Act of 1791:

***"...a person of knowledge, integrity, skilled in the laws, shall be...the President and Judge of the courts of Common Pleas."***

As noted previously in the *Historical Perspective*, the establishment of the original five judicial districts of the Commonwealth, including the FJD, was largely defined by the provision for, and the appointment of, five President Judges.

The responsibilities of the Office of the President Judge include the assignment of judges, encompassing the posting of new judges to the various divisions of the court; the placement of Senior Judges to help dispose of Philadelphia County's case-inventory; and the appointment of out-of-county judges to assist in conflict cases. Also, the President Judge is

responsible for space allocation within the Court of Common Pleas and assignment of judicial chambers. Importantly, the office implements local rules and initiates administrative orders, directives, general court regulations, and legislative enactments. There are five major service centers under the aegis of the President Judge: 1) the Office of the Prothonotary; 2) the Court's Law Library; 3) Court Reporting Services; 4) Court Messenger Services; and 5) the First Judicial District's Procurement Unit.

The Office of the President Judge assigns a Common Pleas Court emergency judge each week who is available during off-court hours to dispose of emergency matters; and during elections, provides for judicial staffing of Election Court, with numerous satellite locations throughout the city, to enable voters to exercise their constitutional right to vote. Through a hearing officer, the Office of the President Judge entertains all petitions that seek to modify judgments issued against criminal defendants, and their sureties, when defendants violate the terms of their bail and fail to appear for court hearings; and maintains a Disbarment Docket of local attorneys placed on inactive status, suspended or disbarred by the Supreme Court. Finally, the Office of the President Judge, through the Coordinator of Mental Health, supervises Court appointed Mental Health Review Officers who, pursuant to the amended Mental Health Procedures Act of 1976, hold hearings on behalf of the Court in four hospitals throughout the City, and at Norristown State Hospital. These regular court events further ensure access to justice for mental health patients, their families, counsel, treatment providers, and others. The Mental Health Review Officers conduct approximately 2,500 informal conferences and hearings each year.

*The President Judge's directive dramatically reduced the number of transcripts generated by the court and lightened the workload of department staff.*

## ACHIEVEMENTS

Under the leadership of President Judge Bonavitacola, many exciting and noteworthy improvements have taken place within the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas during the 1996-1997 biennium, including the creation of an Attorney Disbarment Docket that removes inactive or disbarred attorneys from the Court-appointed attorney panel and from cases in which their appearance was entered. Other initiatives included the elimination of a Bail Forfeiture backlog, and the establishment of new policies and procedures governing the Mental Health Program, designed to better protect the rights and access of the citizens of Philadelphia, while fully complying with the Commonwealth's Mental Health Procedures Act.

Moreover, through the guidance of the Office of the President Judge, implementation of an automated court information line (215-686-7000) expands access to the public. Callers gain access to general court information, in English or Spanish, and, through a series of menu choices, they may be connected to offices that can best answer or resolve thousands of inquiries. This automated system capitalizes upon an existing voice mail system at no extra cost, and saves the First Judicial District valuable personnel time. More importantly, the information line provides twenty-four hour access to the court and its various departments.

Notable improvements were also seen on the Court Reporting front. The Common Pleas Court costs for provision of free copies of notes of testimony involving indigent criminal defendants exceeded \$1,000,000 in 1996, and surpassed \$950,000 in 1997. The amounts cited account only for per page payments to Court Reporters, and do not reflect costs for salaries,

facilities, equipment, or supplies and materials. Per page sums included costs for innumerable duplicate transcripts, and multiple copies of the same transcripts despite their having been provided earlier. In late 1997, President Judge Bonavitacola, relying on the findings of an expert management consultant draft report, directed that superfluous copies of transcripts no longer be provided. This directive dramatically reduced the number of transcripts generated by the court and lightened the workload of department staff. It has also considerably decreased Court expenditures for paper, supplies and postage. Moreover, the Court Reporting Department has modified the record archival system and significantly reduced substantial storage expenditures that the District continues to incur.

## DEPARTMENTS

**Court Reporter Services:** The Court of Common Pleas is a Court of Record. All court proceedings must be transcribed. The Court employs over 100 Official Court Reporters who are supervised by a Director with an administrative staff. The Director of Court Reporting Services, Janet Fasy Dowds, was appointed in August 1997. Ms. Dowds, has, since her appointment, initiated many improvements to the systems for provision of the official record.

Official Court Reporters are assigned to courtrooms to stenographically record testimony, arguments or other spoken presentations heard by judges. Reporters then provide copies of the transcripts of those proceedings to judges, the District Attorney's Office, plaintiff or defense attorneys, and to the Clerk of Quarter Sessions.

At the behest of the President Judge, a study of the Official Court Reporters in both Municipal and Common Pleas Courts was conducted by the National Center for State Courts in conjunction with the National Court Reporters Association during the 1996-1997 biennium. The study encompassed a wide range of topics, including reporter accountability, salaries, the use of per diem reporters, new technologies, record retention, and management operations. A comprehensive Draft Report was issued in 1997.

On the horizon, an exciting technological advancement will save the court time and money, and alleviate heavy burdens placed on judges, attorneys, and their briefcases. Minuscript is a computer software enhancement that generates condensed transcripts allowing eight pages to be printed on both sides of a single sheet of paper. Arguably, paper usage and costs could be reduced by as much as 88%. Implementation is targeted for 1998. This innovation will also have a tremendous effect on the environment and the production and storage costs of notes of testimony, enabling the District to better utilize finite resources.

**Law Library:** The mission of the Law Library, supervised by Law Librarian James M. Clark, is to provide support for the legal and general research activities of First Judicial District judges and other personnel. Toward that end, library workers pursue a full range of traditional and technologically enhanced information delivery strategies designed to

provide timely, accurate, and efficient access to the sources of law. Located in Room 600, City Hall, and relying on a collection of 40,000 volumes, Lexis/Nexis, the Internet, and First Judicial District networked resources, the main library offers access to three distinct and comprehensive libraries of law, general reference, and government information. In addition, four satellite libraries, each with a

standardized book collection, Lexis/Nexis, and network access, are situated within separate facilities housing Criminal, Family, Domestic Relations, and Complex Litigation Civil Court Judges.

Included among important library achievements during 1996-97 were the introduction of Internet access into library services, the creation and development of two branch libraries in the Criminal Justice Center and Family Court, and the retrospective conversion of over 1,000

book titles into machine-readable card format (MARC) that will significantly enhance implementation of an on-line public access catalog of library holdings. The library looks forward to meeting the following goals in 1998: increased Internet access; the introduction of CD-ROM technology into library services; and the completion of an on-line card catalog project that will ultimately provide First Judicial District Judges with desk-top access to the library's catalog.



Law Library - Criminal Justice Center

*Included among notable library achievements during 1996-97 were the introduction of Internet access into library services, the creation and development of two branch libraries in the Criminal Justice Center and Family Court...*



Joseph H. Evers  
Prothonotary

**Procurement Unit:** In 1990, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court completely reorganized the administrative structure of the Philadelphia Courts. As part of this reorganization, the First Judicial District, working in cooperation with the City of Philadelphia and the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC), was able to take control of Court procurement functions previously administered by the City and County of Philadelphia.

Located at 1801 Vine Street, the Procurement Unit, directed by Joseph DiGuglielmo, controls purchasing of all equipment and supplies, and administers all contracts for services within the District. Activities of the Procurement Unit are intended to ensure that quality goods and services are expeditiously delivered to judges and staff at reasonable cost. Procurement Unit cost saving operational efficiencies reap benefits across the entire FJD. Cost savings fund technology enhancements, training, and space improvements. In 1996-1997, Procurement Unit reserves financed: the acquisition of the Criminal Court Computer System; the new Civil Court Case Management System; on-going upgrades and maintenance of the First Judicial District Wide Area Network (WAN); relocations and space renovations; and increased training opportunities for judiciary and staff.

**Office of The Prothonotary:** The Prothonotary is as significant in a historical context as it is indispensable in its modern day role as chief clerk of the civil Courts of the FJD. Historical references to the title "Prothonotary" hark back to the Ecclesiastical Court during the Middle Ages and the English

Court of the King's Bench. It has also been said to be the oldest and continuously held legal office in the Western hemisphere. In the contemporary sense, the Prothonotary is recognized as the clerk who keeps records and the great seal, issues process, enters judgment and certifies the record.

The Office of the Prothonotary was created under the provisions of Article 9, Section 4, of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The duties, responsibilities,

and other provisions of the office are set forth under Title 42, Judiciary and Judicial Procedure, Section 2737 of Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes.

The Prothonotary of Philadelphia is appointed by the judges of the Court of Common Pleas. In May of 1995, Joseph H. Evers was appointed

Prothonotary of Philadelphia. The Prothonotary is assisted by two Deputy Prothonotaries, Stanley J. Chmielewski and Bonnie O'Kane, as well as a support staff of 66 employees.

The Prothonotary is, by law, responsible for all the civil business of the Courts. The Prothonotary must maintain the seal of the Court and has the power and duty to administer oaths and affirmation and affix and attest the seal of the Court or Courts. In addition, the Prothonotary controls process and thereby establishes Court jurisdiction, certifies all pertinent documents and records and exemplifies the business of the Court, while entering all civil judgments and satisfactions of civil judgments. The Prothonotary is an officer of the Court; and has the authority to "exercise such other powers and perform such other duties as may now or hereafter be vested in or imposed upon the office by law...".

*The word "Prothonotary" is a combination of the Greek word "Protos" meaning "first" and the Latin word "Notarius", meaning "scribe or clerk". The most famous Prothonotary was the lawyer Andrew Hamilton.*



The Office of the Prothonotary receives in excess of 100,000 original civil filings each year and maintains a current inventory in excess of 500,000 active civil files.

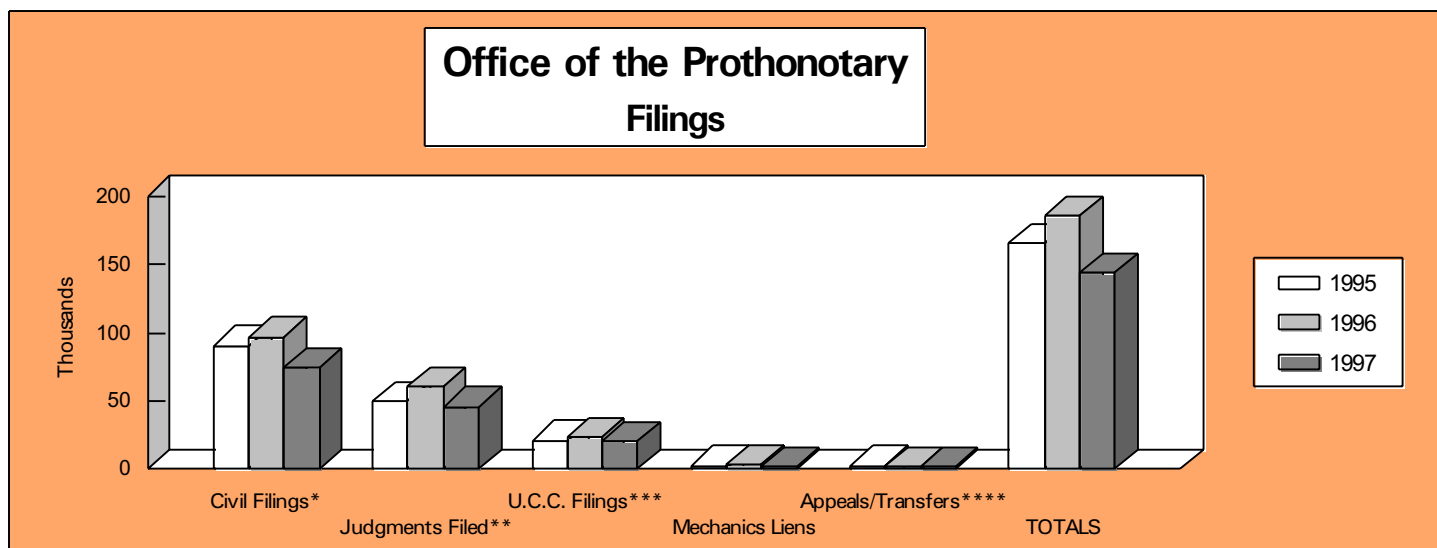
Within the previous two years, the Office of the Prothonotary has undertaken numerous initiatives:

- *Imaging of Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) Filings:* The immediate goal of this project is the integration of imaging technology within UCC procedures. The aims are to provide superior service through enhanced office facilities and efficient utilization of personnel resources, and to develop funds for reinvestment. The preparation and implementation of this system is a first in the United States and may serve as a model for the entire country.
- *High Density File Storage System:* The installation of an automated high density filing system has allowed for the consolidation of records in a central location. The space gained from this endeavor will provide for the return of records presently

stored off-site at great expense. Improvements are also expected to support more effective screening and destruction of records in accordance with record retention schedules.

- *Access to Court Data Via Internet:* With the support of Court Administration, data will be available to third parties via the Internet for a fee, expanding access. With the leadership of the Prothonotary at the forefront of technological advancement and modern managerial practices, change continues to be predicated on the principle that productivity and cost benefits arise from enhanced staff morale.

The facilities of the Office of the Prothonotary are a source of pride for the First Judicial District as evidenced by the many visits from interested Court personnel throughout the country and the world. The office's dedication inspires employees and the public to enjoy successes today that will likely continue well into the future.



	1995	1996	1997
Civil Filings*	90,188	96,531	74,435
Judgments Filed**	49,657	60,324	45,670
U.C.C. Filings***	20,837	23,329	20,221
Mechanics Liens	2,633	2,844	1,488
Appeals/Transfers****	2,146	1,982	1,529
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>165,461</b>	<b>185,010</b>	<b>143,343</b>

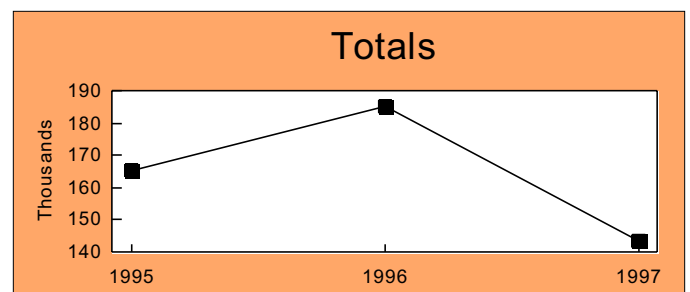
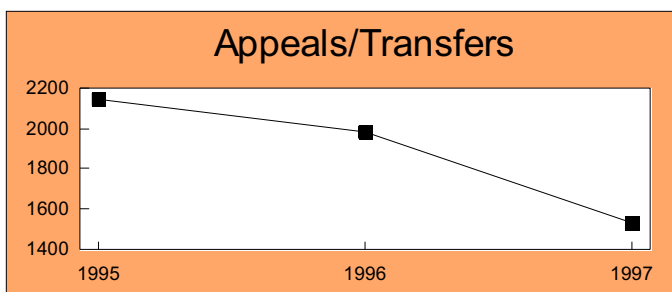
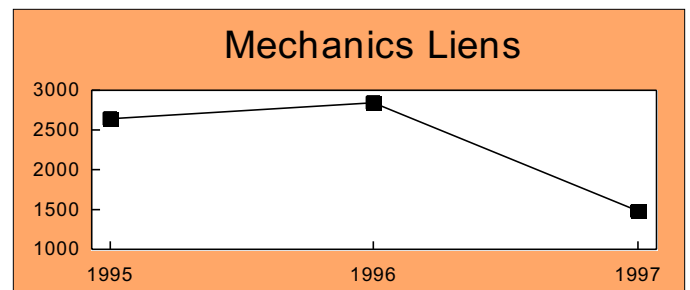
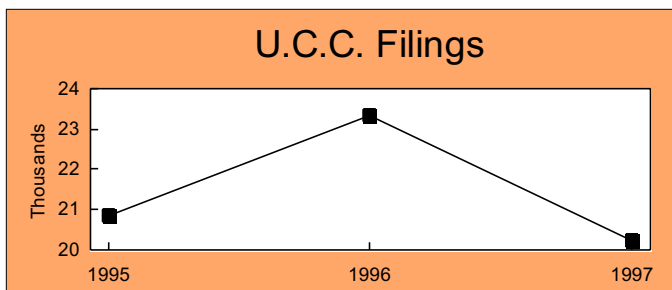
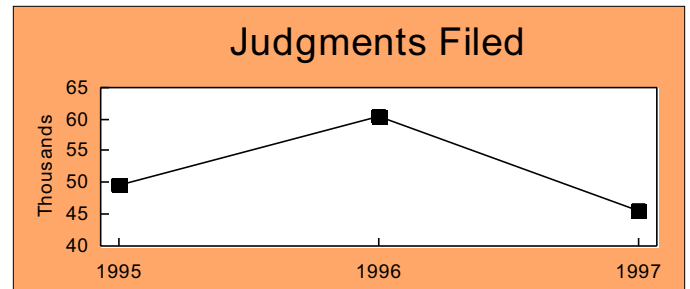
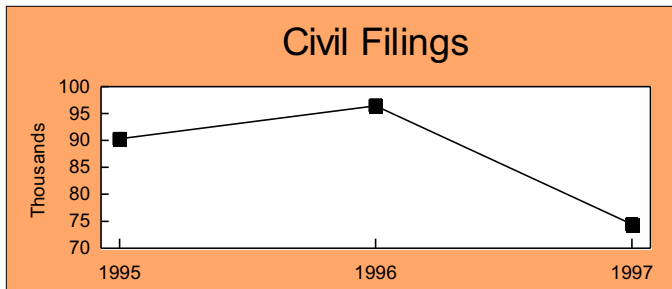
\*Civil Filings represent all types of filings presented in the Civil Commencement Unit.

\*\*Judgment filings include individually filed actions and Judgments filed in Operation of Law, which includes Fines and Costs, Restitution, Support and Traffic Court Judgments filed in an automated process by the Agencies.

\*\*\*U.C.C. filings include UCC1 and UCC3 matters.

\*\*\*\*Appeals, Transfers and Removals are transactions that require us to physically move a file to another court or jurisdiction.

## OFFICE OF THE PROTHONOTARY NEW FILINGS





John W. Herron  
Administrative Judge

## Letter from the Administrative Judge

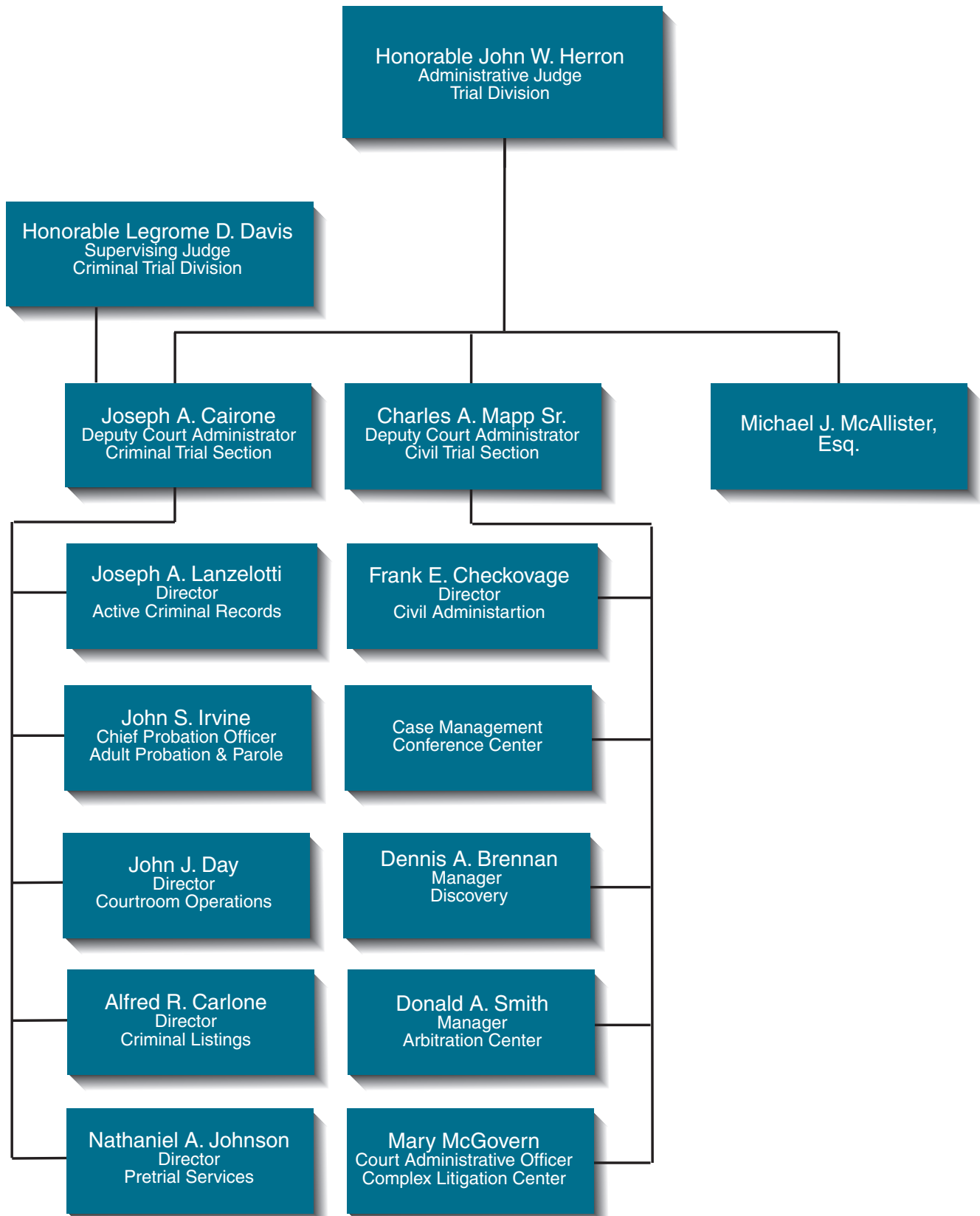
These years have offered myriad opportunities for improving the delivery of justice in both the Civil and Criminal Divisions of the Court of Common Pleas. In both areas of the Trial Division, we have sought to reconfigure the Court, moving from the calendar judge system of assigning matters to the creation of judicial teams, each with a team leader and a small number of judges specifically assigned to a certain portion of the inventory of active cases. Many judges have accepted these leadership positions at a cost of considerable additional administrative responsibility, time and effort for themselves and staff. The Trial Division has been strengthened by the additional delegation of leadership responsibility. The second major focus has been on increasing case management, especially on the civil side. Case managers have been added to the complement of Court personnel and meet with lawyers in all cases 90 days after filing to impose a structured Case Management Order governing the critical events.

Complementing the program changes in judicial leadership and case management, the Trial Division has made major changes in certain physical facilities in City Hall to complement the civil delay reduction strategy. These changes have resulted in abolishing a separate filing area for motions and consolidating that function within the Prothonotary's office on the second floor. Civil Administration now occupies completely restored facilities immediately contiguous to the Prothonotary's Office and both the Motion Court and Discovery courtrooms have been located nearby, thus establishing all civil filing, processing and disposition of discovery and non-discovery motions within one adjacent area in City Hall. In addition, a new Case Manager conference area and Dispute Resolution Center have been established on the sixth floor to aid counsel in the case management and settlement processes. Finally, a lawyer/client meeting area has been established in refurbished Courtroom 225. These exciting developments and additions have paved the way for a completely revamped Civil Program.

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## OVERVIEW

In terms of the number of Judges and employees, the Trial Division is the largest subdivision of the Court of Common Pleas. Indeed, the Division employs more workers in support of more judges than any other court or division across the First Judicial District. Sixty-seven judges, or 54% of the total FJD judiciary, preside in the Trial Division. For the 1996-1997 biennium, more than 84,000 combined civil and criminal cases were recorded in the Trial Division.

Two Major Sections comprise the Trial Division of the First Judicial District: 1) the Civil Section; and 2) the Criminal Section. The Trial Division management structure is headed by Administrative Judge John J. Herron, who was appointed by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania in 1996. The Criminal Section also benefits from direction supplied by Supervising Judge Legrome D. Davis. Each of the two sections of the Trial Division is managed by a Deputy Court Administrator. In the Civil Section, that role is filled by Charles A. Mapp, Sr., while Joseph A. Cairone heads the non-judicial contingent of managers for the Criminal Section. A third component, the Jury Selection Commission, is headed by Commissioner Michael J. McAllister, Esquire. Managers respond to directives of the Administrative Judge and receive guidance from Joseph J. DiPrimio, Esquire, FJD Court Administrator.

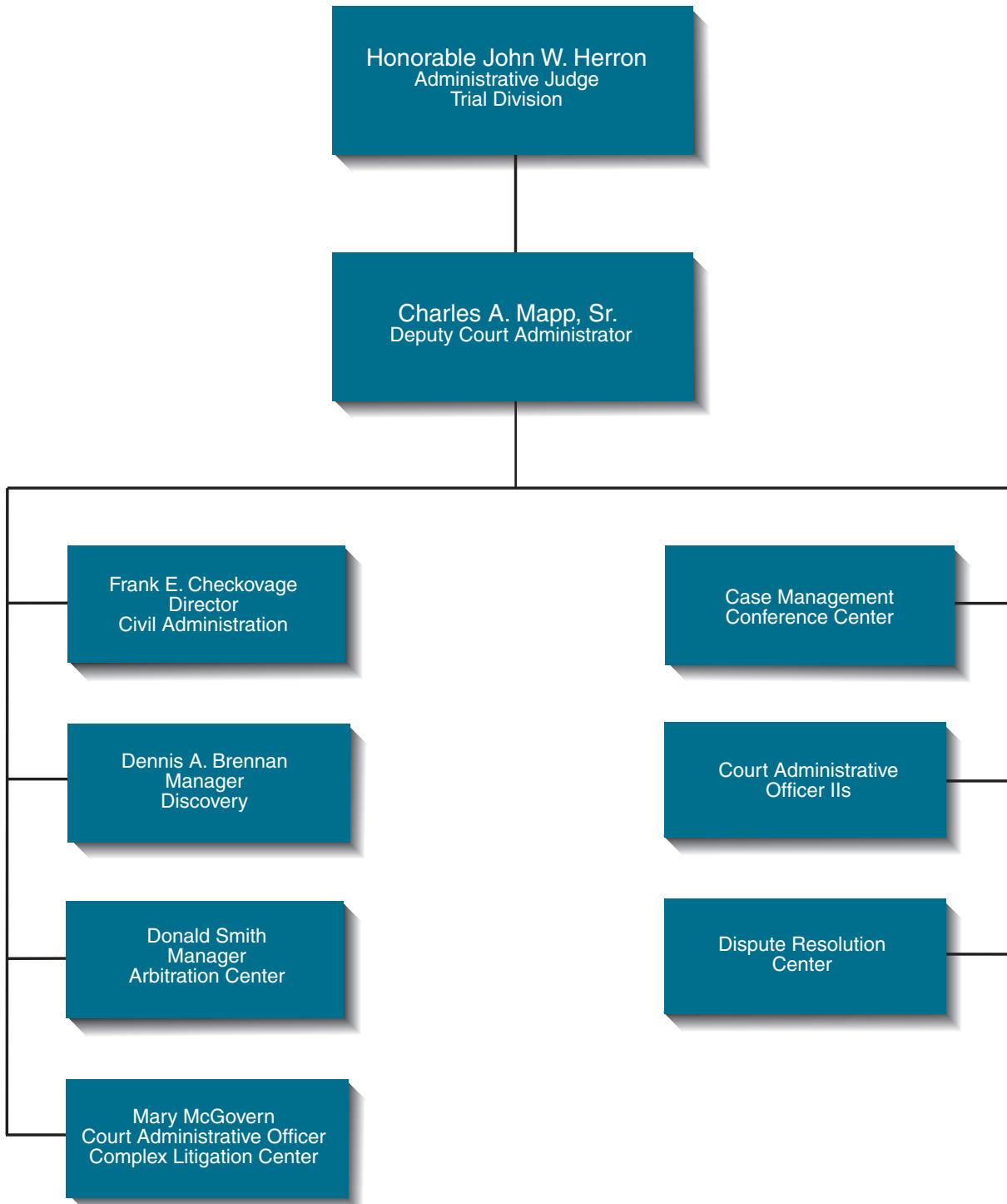
Of the 67 Judges sitting in the Trial Division, 35 preside over Civil cases and 32 are assigned to hear Criminal matters.

The 35 Judges of the Civil Section hear cases categorized into tracks based on case types, complexity, and likely time to disposition. Civil case management programs include: 1) Day Forward; 2) Day Backward; 3) Mass Torts; 4) Major Non Jury cases and Appeals from Arbitration; and 5) Class Actions, Business Tax, and Compulsory Arbitration. The 47 Civil Division employees operate out of several locations — including the Complex Litigation Center at the Wanamaker Building — with the majority of the Civil Courtrooms situated in Philadelphia City Hall.

Trial Division Criminal Judges preside over cases that, through similar case management systems, are initially classified in one of three major categories: 1) Homicide; 2) Section Calendar (serious and complex felonies); and 3) List Program (non-jury felony trials). The Chief Criminal Calendar Judge reviews cases assigned to the Homicide and Section Calendar programs. Also, the Section Calendar and List Programs are further delineated into subsections where cases are evaluated and assigned “tracks” depending on the likelihood of disposition.

The Jury Selection Commission empanels jurors for civil and criminal cases working from a pool of about 400 candidates each working day. Annualized, this means that the Commission provides approximately 100,000 people with the opportunity to participate in the judicial process, bolstering access to justice. To designate these prospective jurors, well over half of a million pieces of mail are processed per year by the Jury Selection Commission.







Charles A. Mapp, Sr.  
Deputy Court Administrator  
Civil Trial Division

*The goal of the Civil Section of the Trial Division is to ensure the efficient, economical and expedient administration of justice in Philadelphia, providing the highest standard of equality, fairness and integrity to the public.*

## ORGANIZATION

Under the Pennsylvania Constitution, the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas is a court of unlimited original jurisdiction “except as may otherwise be provided by law”. Within that broad context, the Civil Division provides a foundation for decisions affecting social, economic, and legal issues emerging in today’s world — with an eye toward providing greater access in the future. The Civil Section is managed under the direction of Administrative Judge John W. Herron.

Including per diem senior judges, 35 Common Pleas Court Judges preside over five major branches of the Civil Section: 1) Major Jury Day Forward; 2) Major Jury Day Backward; 3) Complex Litigation; 4) Statutory Appeals; and 5) Compulsory Arbitration. These programmatic case type categories function within the structure of the principal departmental service centers of Civil Administration: the Complex Litigation Center; the Arbitration Center; the Civil Case Management Center; the Dispute Resolution Center; and the Motion and Discovery Courts. The Deputy Court Administrator in charge of the Civil Trial Division is Charles A. Mapp, Sr. Reporting to him are the managers of each of the service centers identified above. There are a total of 47 employees assigned

to Civil Administration. Employees execute their duties in support positions within their individual units and provide assistance to the public and the Bar in an informed, professional, and courteous manner. To enable employees to fulfill their responsibilities and achieve their individual and common goals a series of Legal Administration Workshops began in 1997.

As a court of unlimited jurisdiction the Civil Section of the Court of Common Pleas received 68,259 cases filed in 1996 and 1997 disposing approximately 87,605 cases. The dedication of the Civil Section leadership and employees to providing Access to Justice is manifested in the implementation of innovative, progressive case flow management systems augmented by continuing education for support staff, the creation of appropriate Pre-Trial forums, and advancements in technology.

## PURPOSE

The goal of the Civil Section of the Trial Division is to ensure the efficient, economical and expedient administration of justice in Philadelphia, providing the highest standard of equality, fairness and integrity to the public.



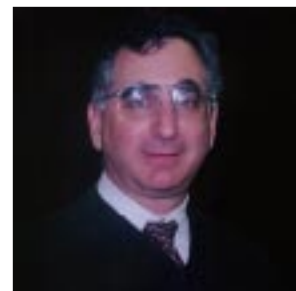
Judge Howland W. Abramson



Judge Norman Ackerman



Judge Jacqueline Allen



Judge Mark I. Bernstein



Judge Matthew D. Carrafiello

### RESPONSIBILITIES

Creative and resourceful managerial design fostered by Civil Section leadership during the 1996-1997 biennial period led to the integration of several innovative civil case management systems. These new strategies have proven so successful that they have been incorporated as standard procedures. In effect, recent achievements have also redefined responsibilities for the Civil Section. Tasks have evolved with the adoption of new ideas in Court administration.

To ensure effective, efficient management, the First Judicial District **Case Management Center**, located in Room 613, City Hall, was created and opened in 1996 to provide a centralized location for Case Management Conferences. The center is staffed by five Case Managers. The purpose of the conferences, scheduled 90 days from date of commencement, is to provide the court and parties with early disclosure of basic information enabling managers to assign each case to an appropriate track: Expedited, Standard or Complex. Case Management Orders, setting forth deadlines for discovery, expert reports and the filing of motions, as well as conference and trial schedules, drive the process toward the collaborative goal of expedited, prudent resolution.

The commitment to innovation is further illustrated in the work conducted at the **Dispute Resolution Center**, opened in 1997. Located in Room 691 City Hall, the Center is under the supervision of manager Frank E. Checkovage. All settlement conferences in the Major Jury Programs are conducted by special Judges Pro Tempore, working under the direct supervision of Judicial Team Leaders. Employing the principle that early intervention and preparation lead to more timely and better dispositions, conferences scheduled at the completion of discovery in this forum enable the parties to resolve disputes without unnecessary extensive trial preparation. Non-resolution of cases at this point triggers the scheduling of Pre-Trial Conferences before the Judicial Team Leader, who may then issue orders scheduling cases for trial. This system holds down additional costs to the parties and the Court, and, through improved efficiency, provides greater access to quality justice.

Another fresh approach represents a landmark in judicial administration. **The Complex Litigation Center** was the first courthouse in the United States designed exclusively for complex, multi-filed Mass Tort cases when it opened on February 10, 1992. Commentators analyzing the explosion of mass tort litigation in the 1980's observed that "reflecting the special treatment courts accord mass



Judge Mary D. Colins



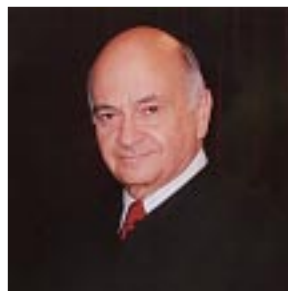
Judge Pamela Pryor Dembe



Judge Victor J. DiNubile, Jr.



Judge Myrna P. Field



Judge Bernard J. Goodheart



Senior Judge Marvin R. Halbert

claims, at least one trial court (the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas) has formally established a “mass torts” calendar, administered by a special cadre of judges operating out of a specially equipped facility”. The Honorable Victor J. DiNubile, Jr., assisted by Court Administrative Officer Mary McGovern, supervises the administration of several programs conducted at the Complex Litigation Center located on the 12th floor of The Wanamaker Building (off the southeast corner of City Hall).

*... at least one trial court (the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas) has formally established a “mass torts” calendar, administered by a special cadre of judges operating out of a specially equipped facility.*

## CASE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

**Day Forward Program:** The Major Jury Day Forward Program was developed in 1995 under the aegis of the then Administrative, and now President Judge, Alex BonavitaCola. The Day Forward Program encompasses Major Civil Jury cases, with the exception of Mass Tort cases, filed after January 1, 1995. Under the direction of individual Judicial Team Leaders, the program is structured to focus

on new cases filed per year. Currently, there are three Day Forward Teams: Day Forward 1995 under the supervision of Judge Mark I. Bernstein; Day Forward 1996 under the supervision of Judge Albert W. Sheppard; and, Day Forward 1997 under the supervision of Judge Joseph D. O’Keefe. The success of the Case Flow Management principles employed in the Day

Forward Program is evidenced in the filing of approximately 16,391 cases since 1995 and the resolution of approximately 11,337 cases by the end of 1997.

**Day Backward Program:** The Day Backward Program was inaugurated by President Judge Alex BonavitaCola with an initial inventory of almost 29,000 cases. This program was designed to effectuate the resolution of aged cases, from oldest forward, in an efficient and judiciously expedient manner. Toward that end, the Court embraced case flow management mechanisms combining consistent communication, cooperation and commitment. In Day Backward, Case Management and Settlement Conferences



Judge Gene D. Cohen



Judge Amanda Cooperman



Judge Alfred J. DiBona, Jr.



Judge Arthur S. Kafrissen



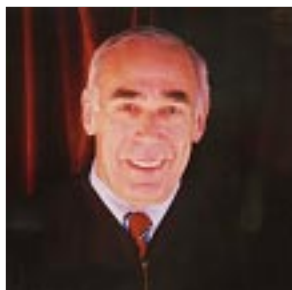
Judge Marlene F. Lachman



Senior Judge William J. Lederer



Judge Samuel M. Lehrer



Judge Stephen E. Levin

Judge Frederica A.  
Massiah-Jackson

Judge Arnold L. New

are held in the Case Management and Dispute Resolution Service Centers. At the conclusion of calendar year 1995, approximately 30,249 cases had been resolved.

- By 1996, under the direction of Coordinating Judge G. Craig Lord, along with three Judicial Team Leaders, the inventory of 28,496 at the program's inception was reduced to 5,296 cases pending by year's end.
- In 1997, under the direction of Coordinating Judge William J. Manfredi, assisted by two Judicial Team Leaders, the inventory was further reduced to approximately 1,500 cases. As a result of the Judicial dedication and efficient management of this program, projections indicate that resolution of all Day Backward cases will be accomplished during 1998.

**Mass Tort Program:** The Mass Tort Program calendar includes litigation involving Asbestos, DES, L-tryptophan, Lead Paint, Breast Implant, Orthopedic Bone Screw, Thorotrast, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, Norplant, Latex Gloves,

Benzine, Tylenol, Stomach Staples, Hearing Loss, Factor Concentrate and Tobacco. Mass Tort Programs rely on regular monthly or bi-monthly meetings of counsel, the Supervising Judge, and the Court Administrative Officers. These mandatory meetings are designed to

encourage Bench/Bar cooperation in the creation of innovative, efficient and economical case management procedures, and standardized pleadings. As a result, tailored case management orders delineate the manner in which cases are filed; streamlined

motion and discovery procedures; designation of liaison counsel; and the scheduling of trial dates certain. All Mass Tort Programs, including Asbestos, are currently on an 18 to 24 month time-to-disposition track.

- As a result of streamlined Mass Tort case management procedures, approximately 900 cases were commenced in 1996 and more than 600 cases were disposed. In 1997 almost 1,200 cases were commenced and about 1,800 cases were disposed.

*As a result of the Judicial dedication and efficient management of this program, projections indicate that resolution of all Day Backward cases will be accomplished during 1998.*



Judge Joseph I. Papalini

Judge Nitza I.  
Quinones Alejandro

Judge Paul Ribner

Senior Judge  
Edward B. Rosenberg



**Major Non-Jury Cases and Appeals from Arbitration:** In addition to the Mass Tort Programs, the Complex Litigation Center houses management and trial of all Major Non-Jury cases and Appeals from Arbitration. All Major Non-Jury cases undergo Status/Trial Scheduling Conferences approximately 90 days after commencement. These conferences generate Pre-Trial Orders that prompt mandatory settlement conferences and trial dates certain within one year of commencement. Approximately 400 trial Scheduling Conferences are conducted monthly.

- In 1996 and 1997 almost 10,000 of these cases were commenced and more than 11,000 cases were resolved.

The Arbitration Appeal Program is managed similarly with Trial Scheduling Conferences at the commencement of Appeals that generate mandatory settlement conferences and trial dates certain. Approximately 200 Appeal from Arbitration Trial Scheduling Conferences are conducted monthly.

- In 1996 and 1997 about 4,300 Appeals from Arbitration were filed and approximately 4,600 appeals were disposed.

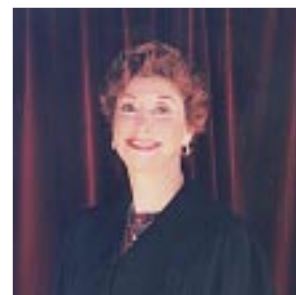
A separate trial list for each program is published in Philadelphia's daily legal journal, The Legal Intelligencer, for a four week period. Non-Jury and Jury cases are tried in a "piggy-back" fashion; while a jury is being selected, the Trial Judge presides over a Non-Jury case. Essentially, the resources of one courtroom serve two cases simultaneously — meaning improved judicial efficiency and economy, and access to justice.

**Statutory Appeals:** The Statutory Appeals Program, under the supervision of Judge Stephen Levin, includes Administrative Agency Appeals, Class Actions and City Business Tax cases. The Statutory Appeals Program consists of appeals from adjudications of state and local administrative agencies. Close to 2,500 appeals were filed in 1996 and 1997, and, with efficient case management procedures, approximately 2,200 cases were disposed.

**Class Actions, Business Tax, and Compulsory Arbitration:** Administration and management of Class Actions are governed by Pa. R.C.P. 1703(b). Pursuant thereto, the Supervising Judge is responsible for all aspects of the case from commencement until trial. In the event of settlement, the Supervising Judge is responsible for class notification and conducting settlement fairness hearings.



Judge William J. Manfredi



Judge Sandra Mazer Moss



Judge Joseph D. O'Keefe



Judge Albert W. Sheppard, Jr.



Judge Esther R. Sylvester



Judge Allan L. Tereshko



Judge Flora Barth Wolf



In the event of trial, cases are assigned judges in the Day Forward Program. During 1996 and 1997, 86 Class Action suits were filed and 57 were resolved.

Judge Levin also supervises the conduct of City Business Tax cases instituted for the collection of outstanding business, wage, or other taxes having an amount in controversy in excess of \$50,000. In 1996 and 1997 about 200 such cases were filed and more than 200 cases were resolved.

Civil cases having amounts of \$50,000 or less in controversy — exclusive of interest and costs — are assigned to the Compulsory Arbitration Program. All

Compulsory Arbitration Hearings are held in the ***Court of Common Pleas Arbitration Center*** located on the 2nd Floor of 1601 Market Street. To ensure the efficiency of this program, Arbitration Hearings are scheduled for dates eight months from the date of commencement. The Prothonotary schedules hearings before the Arbitration Panels consisting of three attorneys engaged in the active practice of law, with principal offices in Philadelphia. Eight to twelve panels of Arbitrators hear approximately 30 cases per day.

- During 1996 and 1997 in excess of 35,300 cases were filed in Arbitration and over 42,800 cases were resolved.

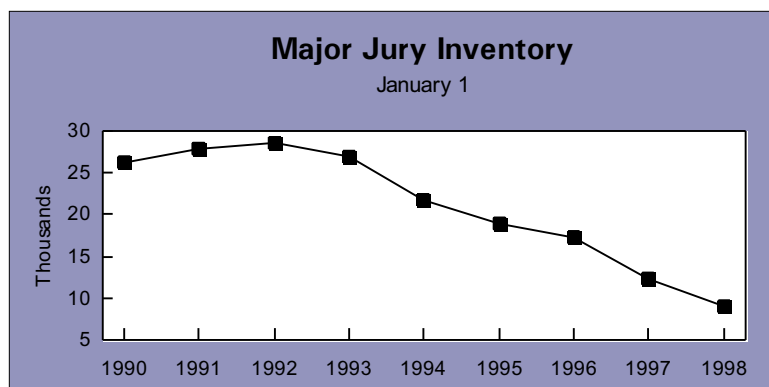


Sculpture at John F. Kennedy Plaza.

## COURT OF COMMON PLEAS/CIVIL TRIAL SECTION STATISTICAL SUMMARY

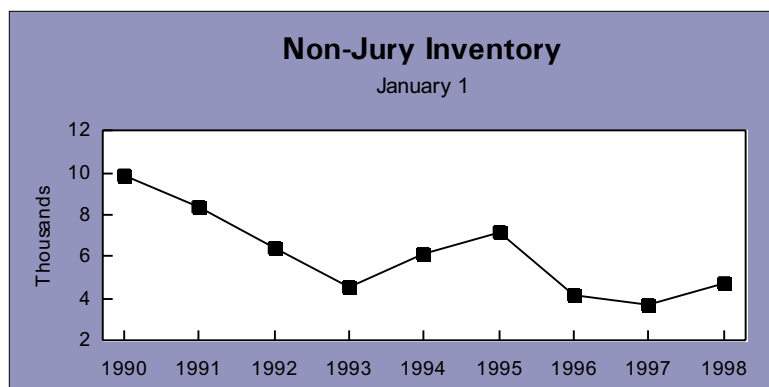
### Major Jury Inventory as of January 1

Year	Inventory 1/1	Filings	Dispositions
1990	26,155	10,755	9,131
1991	27,779	10,758	10,041
1992	28,496	9,973	11,568
1993	26,901	7,425	12,537
1994	21,789	6,661	9,536
1995	18,886	7,763	9,389
1996	17,260	5,169	8,479
1997	12,349	5,307	12,921
1998	9,074		



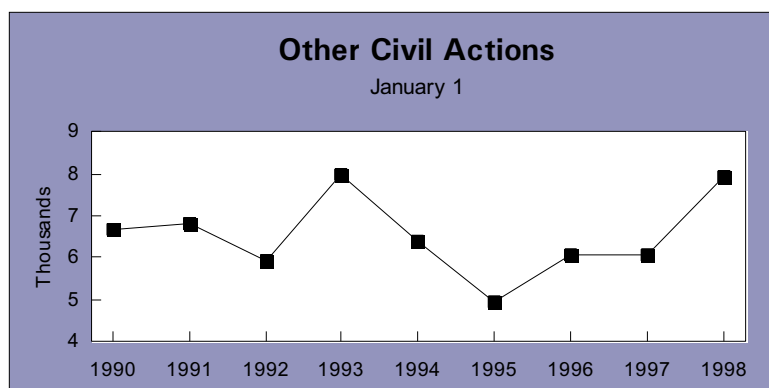
### Non-Jury Inventory as of January 1

Year	Inventory 1/1	Filings	Dispositions
1990	9,857	6,553	8,087
1991	8,323	6,729	8,690
1992	6,362	9,475	9,498
1993	4,499	5,002	3,305
1994	6,132	4,521	3,532
1995	7,121	4,026	7,987
1996	4,112	6,581	7,030
1997	3,731	3,473	4,057
1998	4,713		



### Other Civil Actions\* (Excluding Arbitration)

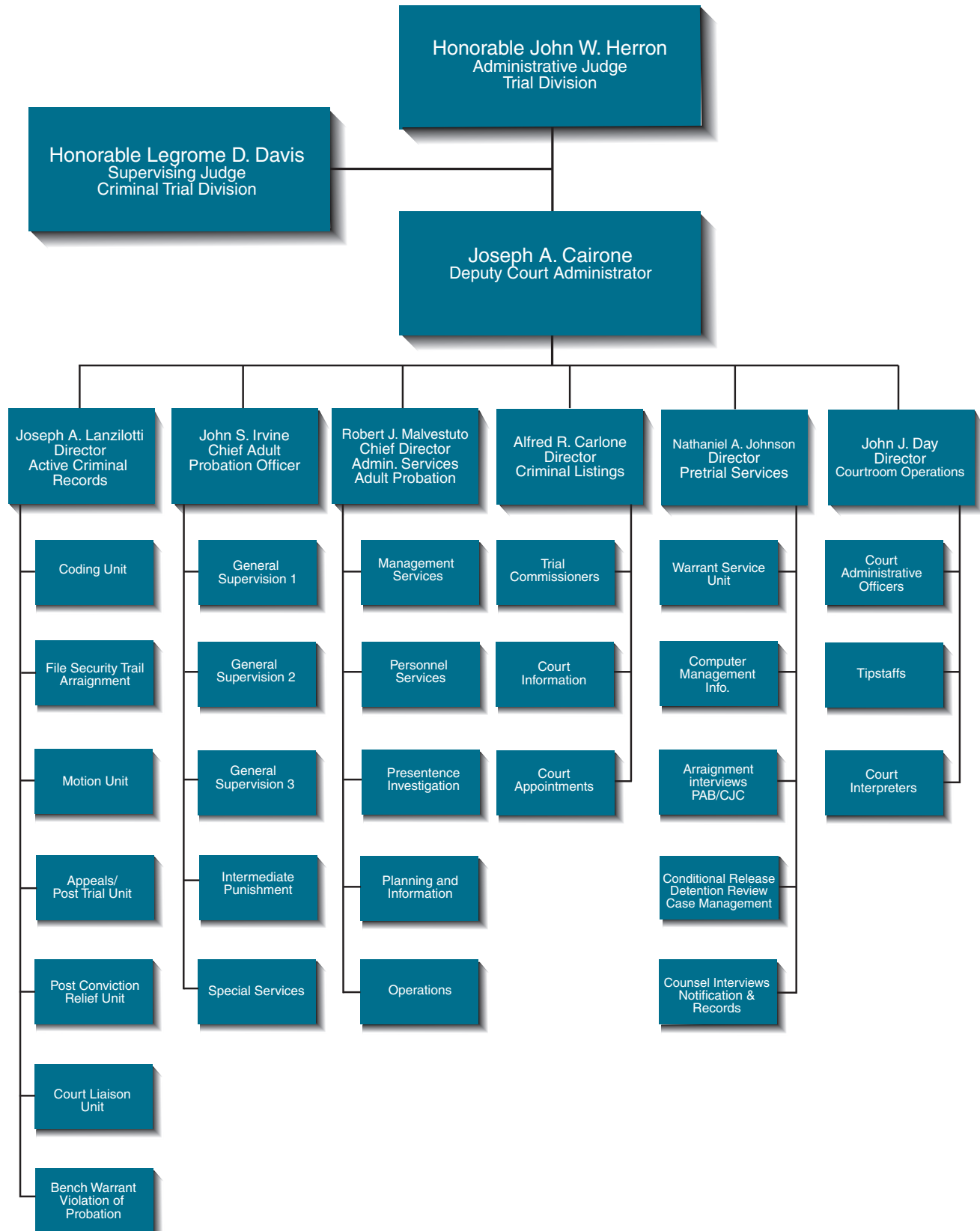
Year	Inventory 1/1	Filings	Dispositions
1990	6,678	6,790	5,928
1991	6,790	532	1,385
1992	5,928	718	1,691
1993	7,980	5,803	7,490
1994	6,385	5,855	7,305
1995	4,935	6,435	6,684
1996	6,045	3,803	4,713
1997	6,047	7,050	7,690
1998	7,922		



\*Includes Mass Tort, Appeals from Arbitration, Appeals from Municipal Court, Tax Cases & Statutory Appeals.

\*\*Balances as of 1/1 indicate actual case counts. Filings and dispositions do not include cases which were disposed and subsequently reopened nor transferred between one or more programs.

## Criminal Section Branch Organization





Joseph A. Cairone  
Deputy Court Administrator  
Criminal Section

## ORGANIZATION

The Criminal Section receives approximately 16,000 felony filings each year. There are 32 Common Pleas judges assigned to preside over felony matters and related hearings in the Section. Administrative Judge John W. Herron and Supervising Judge Legrome D. Davis supervise the administration of all facets of the Criminal Section operation. Judicial leaders are supported in turn by Deputy Court Administrator Joseph A. Cairone, and divisional departments through Directors and Chiefs. Five major branches comprise the Criminal Section organizational structure: 1) Active Criminal Records; 2) Adult Probation and Parole Department (APPD); 3) Courtroom Operations; 4) Criminal Listings; and 5) Pretrial Services.

## PURPOSE

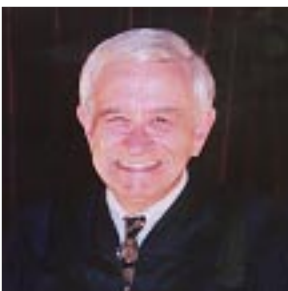
The Section aims for the continuous and expeditious provision of quality criminal justice — particularly concerning the early resolution of impediments to trial — via modern case management systems, adept pre-trial and post-trial defendant supervision, and the supply of qualified legal counsel to the indigent. Through these means, the Criminal Section cultivates access to swift but fair outcomes.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

Through evaluation and categorization according to several factors (differentiated case management), cases are assigned to one of three programs: Homicide, Section Calendar (more serious and complex felony cases), and List (non-jury felony bench trials).

The Homicide program operates within a hybrid master/individual calendar framework monitored by the Chief Criminal Calendar Judge who reviews both the Homicide and the Section Calendar categories prior to trial assignment.

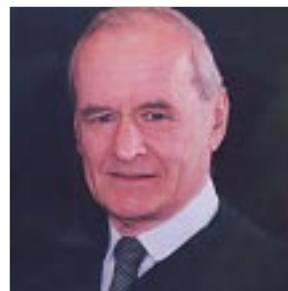
The Section Calendar program has four sections of four judges each, including a section leader. After a thorough pretrial conference, cases are further delineated to tracks based on charges and/or complexity, and assigned randomly by computer to a section for disposition. Section leaders again review cases to ensure compliance with pretrial orders, and examine the possibility of non-trial dispositions. Subsequently, matters are assigned randomly within track by computer to individual judges within each section for disposition. Then, each trial judge maintains an individual calendar and effects disposition.



Judge Bernard J. Avellino



Judge Willis W. Berry, Jr.



Judge Edward J. Bradley



Judge Genece Brinkley



Judge Joan A. Brown



Senior Judge John J. Chiovero



Judge Tama Myers Clark

The List Program is controlled by the assigned judiciary and the office of Criminal Listings. These cases are identified as non-jury bench trials early on — at the time of arraignment. As with the more complex Section Calendar cases, List cases are assigned to tracks, trial readiness conferences are held, and expedited trial listings are scheduled. Criminal Listings Data Entry functions include the daily entry of arraignment information to develop a list of “B” track cases (custody defendants) to encourage the timely disposition of custody cases through agreement, or, alternatively, to ensure that they are ready for trial at the first listing.

*... inventory has been reduced by approximately 35% since ... 1990, and by ... 1,000 cases since the opening of the Criminal Justice Center just prior to the biennium. ...*

### ACHIEVEMENTS

The active case inventory has been reduced by approximately 35% since the introduction of differentiated case management in 1990, and by approximately 1,000 cases since the opening of the Criminal Justice Center just prior to

the biennium. These gains have been maintained through programs initiated during calendar year 1996, and continued through 1997. Importantly, expedited dispositions during these

biennial years have streamlined the trial process and bolstered access through enhanced service delivery. On average, List Program cases are disposed in four months; Section Calendar cases within six months; and Homicide cases

within a year. This represents a significant reduction over past years in the age of cases at the time of adjudication.

In addition to emphasis on case management initiatives bringing timely dispositions, the Section focuses on prison overcrowding problems and methods to maintain or reduce the population. Spearheaded by Supervising Judge Davis, the development of new Pretrial Release Guidelines based on defendants' risk/need assessments were developed and implemented. To assist in reducing the prison population to manageable levels, Criminal Justice

Senior Judge  
Eugene H. Clarke, Jr.

Judge Legrome D. Davis

Senior Judge  
Anthony J. DeFino

Judge Gary F. DiVito



partners met and developed a special release mechanism based on established criteria including defendants' risks and needs, and the potential threat to the community. Consequently, those defendants who are released based on the criteria developed present the least risk to the community. Crash Court, a review mechanism for recently incarcerated defendants charged with misdemeanors, and staffed by Common Pleas Trial Commissioners located on-site at the prison, was expanded to include greater numbers of inmates and to provide accelerated release where appropriate.

During 1996-1997, the Pretrial Service Department continued to devote and focus resources on the timely delivery of services to pretrial defendants, and expanded responsibilities to include Electronic Monitoring installation and monitoring for pre-trial and post-trial defendants. The development of an instructional pretrial orientation video, the assignment of new case managers, and the hiring of additional warrant service investigators to ensure the appearance of defendants, have helped reduce the bench warrant population by 2,000 defendants and increase appearance rates. During the latter part

of 1997, the Conditional Release hearing list and the Jackson v. Hendricks review list prepared by Pretrial staff were consolidated and presented to better coordinate Philadelphia Prison System overcrowding relief efforts.

### PROGRAM INITIATIVES

Recognizing the wide array of criminal defendants' needs, Criminal Section leadership developed and participated in the implementation of two innovative Court treatment-oriented programs.

**Female Offenders Comprehensive and Integrated Services (FOCIS):** The FOCIS program targets and recognizes the varied needs of female offenders. Credentialed assessors pinpoint defendants' problems while Integrated Service Coordinators link the Court and the treatment communities. The program, to date, has provided services for 105 female offenders and presently maintains an active roster of 85 clients.

**Municipal Court Treatment Court (Drug Court):** Supervising Judge Davis, Court Administration, and the Pretrial Service Division participated in the initiation of the Municipal Court Treatment Court. Pretrial staff were temporarily assigned to act as Treatment

*The development of an instructional pretrial orientation video, the assignment of new case managers, and the hiring of additional warrant service investigators to ensure the appearance of defendants, have helped reduce the bench warrant population by 2,000 defendants.*



Judge James J. Fitzgerald, III



Judge Steven R. Geroff



Judge Gary S. Glazer



Judge Jane Cutler Greenspan





Judge Lynn Bennett Hamlin



Judge Ricardo C. Jackson



Judge C. Darnell Jones, II

Court Coordinators and case managers to work cooperatively with Municipal Court, the District Attorney's Office and the Defender Association. Additionally, FOCIS staff provided assessments of defendants in the program. A crucial element of this new approach is the careful selection of defendants with substance abuse problems and their engagement with appropriate treatment facilities. Treatment Court is a first in the state of Pennsylvania, and is expected to better serve the needs of defendants and the community. (*See Municipal Court Section.*)

### DEPARTMENTS

**Active Criminal Records**, managed by Director Joseph A. Lanzaletti and Deputy Director Leonard A. Armstrong, is composed of seven units that monitor various aspects of the daily operations of the Criminal Section. The Department is responsible for maintaining the criminal case information; processing pretrial and post trial actions; providing records; scheduling; and coordinating documentation between the Court, Philadelphia Prisons and the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections. By the execution of these duties, Active Crimi-

nal Records is doing its share in providing equal access to the customers of the criminal justice system in a professional and timely manner.

**The Office of Criminal Listings**, led by Director Alfred R. Carlone and Deputy Director Charles A. Lanzaletti, is responsible for overseeing all trial case scheduling and case inventory management. In addition, this office responds to 150,000 telephone, personal, and written inquiries per year. The department also provides support and assistance to the judiciary, staff, attorneys, defendants, witnesses, employees, agencies and the public. This office also processes appointments of counsel for indigent defendants and conducts case review and assignment for the Criminal Section programs. Trial Commissioners are appointed to act in a para-judicial capacity to relieve the criminal Court judiciary of administrative tasks. As a result, access is cultivated through more efficient case flow administration.

**The Pretrial Services Department** under Director Nathaniel A. Johnson, and Deputy Director David V. Preski, is responsible for many of the components that allow for easy access to the Crimi-



Judge D. Webster Keogh



Judge Richard B. Klein



Judge Robert A. Latrone



Judge Anne E. Lazarus

nal Justice process. Using Pretrial Release Guidelines, the Department acts as the informational gatekeeper to support judicial decision-makers from the preliminary arraignment stage through the adjudication process. An interview unit utilizing video technology operates round the clock at the Police Administration Building and Criminal Justice Center sites. The unit provides detailed personal information about defendants, charges, and risks of misconduct gained through interviews. This information is then utilized to make bail determinations. Data concerning personal information, community ties, finances, employment, schooling, and family history are entered into a new personal computer application, PC Pretrial+. The interviewing unit processes in excess of 40,000 defendants a year. The Records Department maintains arrest records for access by Pretrial, other First Judicial District Departments, and external Criminal Justice agencies. Philadelphia

*Over 34,000 adult offenders who have been sentenced to probation and/or paroled from county prison receive Adult Probation and Parole Services.*

Pretrial provides defendant orientation and supervision, and is unique in that it has as one of its major departmental components an armed Warrant/Enforcement Unit operating continuously to enforce release conditions.

***The Adult Probation and Parole Department*** (APPD) was identified by Administrative Judge John W. Herron as a critical component of the justice system when he initiated an evaluation of the Department's opera-

tions immediately after his appointment as Administrative Judge in January 1996. This community corrections agency provides post-trial services to the Courts, serves to protect the community, offers opportunities to offenders to improve their lives, and assists victims. During this biennial period, Managing Judge C. Darnell Jones, II, Co-Chief Probation Officer of APPD Supervision Services John S. Irvine, and Co-Chief Probation Officer of APPD Administrative Services Robert J. Malvestuto were appointed to help lead the Department



Judge Renee Cardwell Hughes



Judge Sheldon C. Jelin



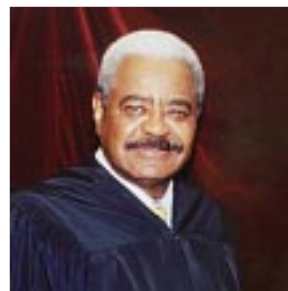
Judge Barbara A. Joseph



Judge Benjamin Lerner



Judge Kathryn S. Lewis



Judge James A. Lineberger



Judge Eugene Edw. J. Maier



Judge William J. Mazzola



Judge Patricia McInerney



Judge John J. Poserina, Jr.

into the 21st Century. A Steering Committee appointed by Judge Herron initially met to examine the varying needs and deliverables of the Department, and the strengths and weaknesses of the Agency through weekly meetings.

Weekly Divisional Unit meetings chaired by Managing Judge Jones also provided staff the opportunity to identify and notify APPD leadership of problems and concerns. A close preliminary examination of the department led to the reassignment of professional probation officers from administrative duties to the vital area of case supervision. Over 34,000 adult offenders who have been sentenced to probation and/or paroled from county prison receive Adult Probation and Parole Services. Offenders under supervision often have substance addiction, mental health, social, educational, or vocational problems. Probation officers are criminal justice experts who must balance issues and needs confronting today's clientele. As a result of the

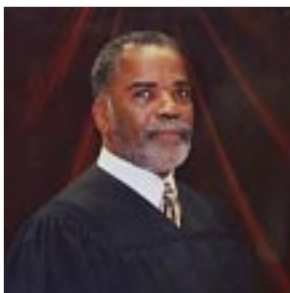
*As a result of the Adult Probation and Parole Department reorganization, average supervising caseloads were reduced, allowing for more concentrated performance.*

reorganization, average supervising caseloads were reduced, allowing for more concentrated performance.

**Common Pleas Courtroom Operations** provides security and operational services in courtrooms. The Chief of Courtroom Operations, John J. Day and Deputy Chief, John Purtell, manage the activities of supervisory and courtroom personnel for criminal and civil courtrooms, implement and develop operational plans and training

procedures, and ensure proper courtroom staffing. They establish and maintain effective working relationships between courtroom staff and the Judiciary, Court Administration, Human Resources, and the public. Additionally, Courtroom Operations provides ADA accommodations in the form of wheelchairs, electronic hearing devices, and connection to the AT&T Language Service Line in the Criminal Justice Center.

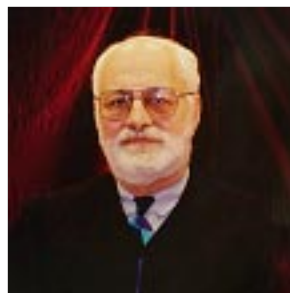
**The Interpreters' Unit** is responsible for the assignment of Spanish speaking interpreters to various Court cases. The



Judge Peter F. Rogers



Judge M. Teresa Sarmina



Senior Judge David N. Savitt



Judge Gregory E. Smith

interpreter's job is to provide access to surmount language barriers to communicative participation. The Trial Division provides other required interpreter services through contracted certified vendors.

### PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

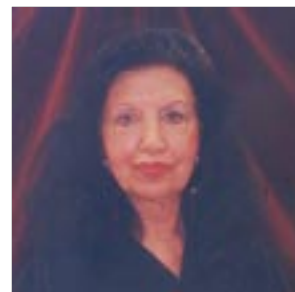
Trial Division leaders recognize achievements in case management and other accomplishments, but they are aware that they must continue to anticipate and address constantly changing demands of the Criminal Justice System. As a result of the APPD Steering Committee and Divisional Unit meetings, it is expected that Phase I of the Adult Probation and Parole Department's reorganization will be announced in the early part of calendar year 1998. The reorganization, fine tuning thereafter,

and other changes at APPD, including a risk/need post-trial assessment tool, will provide the impetus to better reflect the expectations of the Judiciary, the administrative body of the Criminal Section, and the public.

In the immediate future, Differentiated Case Management techniques will be utilized in all Common Pleas criminal matters. Plans for expansion of the Section Calendar program starting in January, 1998 include a Mixed Calendar Section of Homicide matters assigned to a section leader from arraignment with trial according to track as per the Section Calendar protocol previously described. An additional section may be formed in 1998 and implementation of Mixed Homicide and Major Felony cases should be accomplished soon after.



Judge Rayford A. Means



Judge Lisa A. Richette



Judge Albert John Snite, Jr.



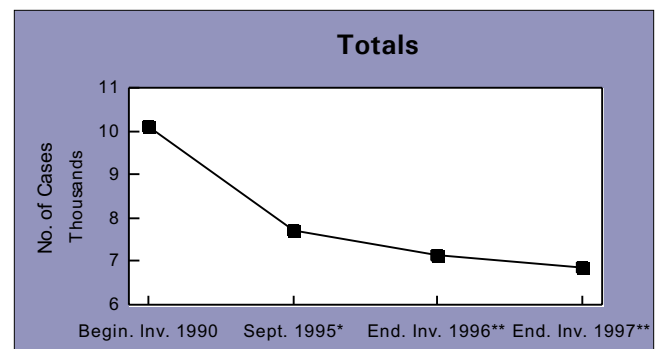
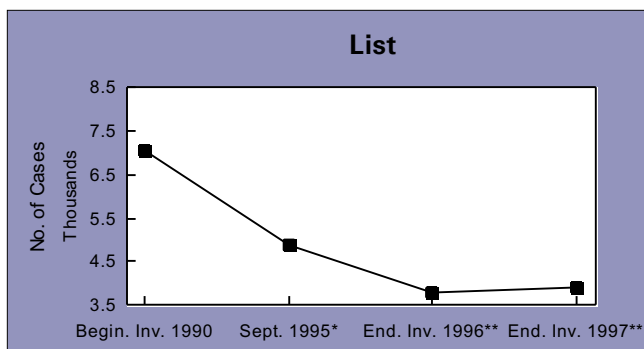
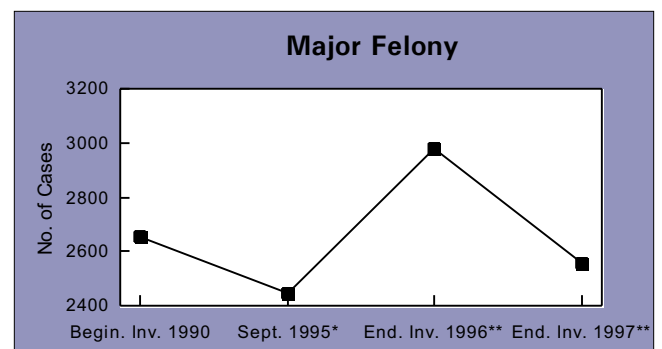
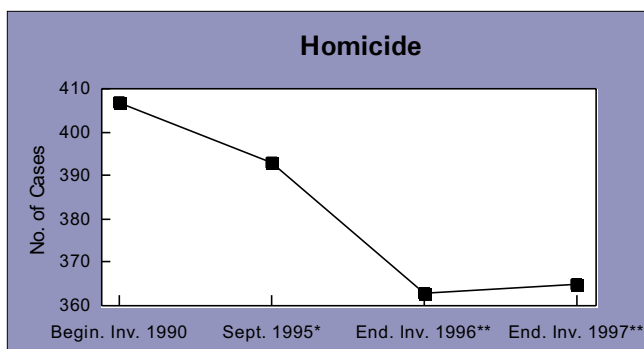
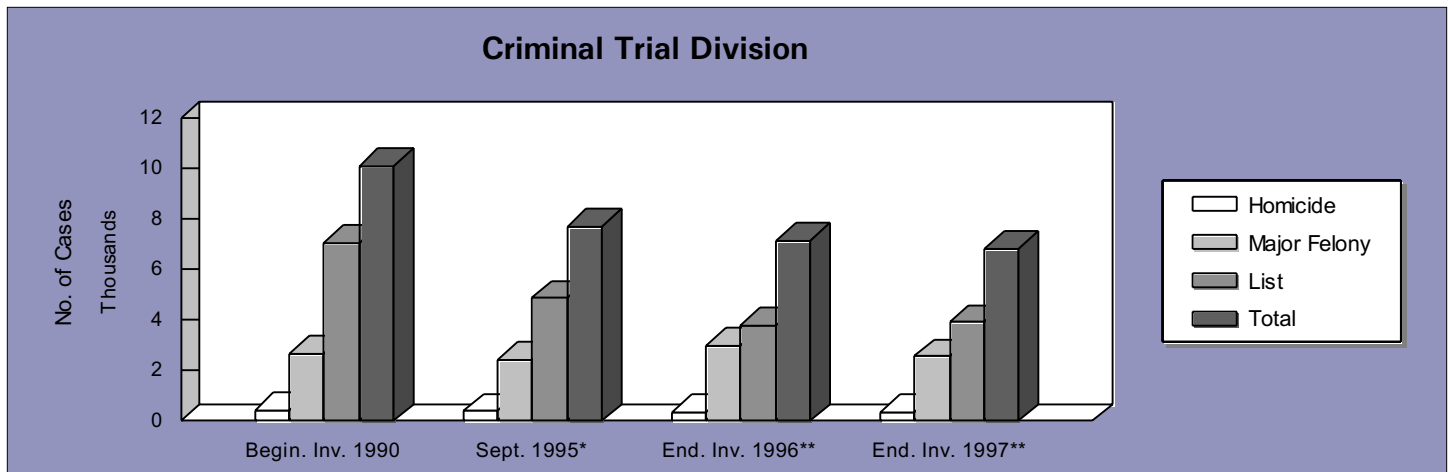
Judge Juanita Kidd Stout



Judge Carolyn Engel Temin



Judge John Milton Younge



	Begin Inv. 1990	Sept. 1995*	End Inv. 1996**	End Inv. 1997**
Homicide	407	393	363	365
Major Felony	2,654	2,444	2,981	2,557
List	7,068	4,880	3,804	3,919
Total	10,129	7,717	7,148	6,841

\*Move to Criminal Justice Center

\*\*Please refer to text for detailed information





Michael J. McAllister, Esquire  
*Jury Selection Commissioner*

## ORGANIZATION & PURPOSE

The importance of public Access to justice is nowhere more evident than in the work of the Jury Selection Commission. Each day, under the direction of Jury Commissioner, Michael J. McAllister, Esquire, the Philadelphia County Jury Selection Commission provides access for approximately 400 prospective jurors who serve more than ninety Criminal and Civil Trial Judges throughout the First Judicial District. Along with the Commissioner and staff, Jury Selection officers, clerks, technicians and managers strive to respectfully and courteously provide access to the Court, to the greatest extent possible, for Philadelphia citizens participating in Jury Service.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

Within the framework of a one day/one trial system, the Commission mails questionnaires and qualifies and summons prospective jurors through more than 600,000 pieces of mail annually. The result: at least 100,000 citizens gain access to the judicial process each year. The Commission also accommodates jurors in the Assembly Room; tracks juror status throughout proceedings in civil and criminal courtrooms; and processes and distributes jury fee checks to participants at the conclusion of their service. While efficiencies continue to reduce criminal and civil case inventories, the demand for jury trials has nonetheless remained constant. Paying nine dollars per day, jury fees disbursed averaged \$1.5 million annually.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

***New Accommodations:*** Formerly located in City Hall, the Jury Selection Commission moved to the current headquarters at the Criminal Justice Center in September 1995. This move, just prior to the beginning of the 1996-1997 biennial report period, generated opportunities to furnish prospective jurors improved access to the Court system through accommodations built for just that purpose. Located in Criminal Justice Center Room 101, the new Jury Assembly Room is easily accessible, barrier free, smoke-free, and comfortably furnished for prospective jurors. An orientation video — “Welcome to Jury Duty” — is available on eleven recessed video monitors so that jurors can learn their integral role in the administration and dispensation of justice. Jurors’ Lounge amenities include vending machines, telephones, water fountains, and expanded restroom facilities. These facilities are vastly improved over those at the former Commission headquarters in City Hall. Desktop PC’s and upgraded office and communications equipment support staff in providing improved quality of service to jurors, other Court agencies and Philadelphia citizens.

***Jury Committee Formed:*** A Judicial Jury Selection Committee has been empaneled to examine issues including juror appreciation, improved automation and technology, effective juror utilization, and methods of promoting juror response. Chaired by Judge Richard Klein, this committee cultivates better communication between the Philadelphia Jury Commissioner, the Judiciary, Court Administration, various Philadelphia Court agencies, and Jury Commissioners from surrounding



jurisdictions. The Committee developed and supported innovative recommendations for improved access to justice for jurors.

***Meet the Judges Program:*** Judge Marvin Halbert, long known to be sensitive to jurors and their contributions, coordinates another successful juror access initiative. In this very successful program, volunteer Judges welcome prospective jurors in the Assembly Room. Jurors have responded favorably to the opportunity to meet judges. Jurors are better oriented to the proceedings and their duties, and more comfortable with the experience. Arguably, these improvements enhance the quality of justice while increasing accessibility.

***Expanding Access:*** For 24-hour access to information, an Automated Voice Mail system conveys general information and answers the most commonly asked questions pertaining to jury questionnaire and summonses. The Internet page titled “Jury Duty in Philadelphia County Courts” under the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Courts On-Line relays information on jury selection and service.

In accordance with the American Disabilities Act of 1990, the Commission works to ensure that qualified individuals with physical disabilities have access to all reasonable and available accommodations essential for their opportunity to effectively serve as jurors.



Paul P. Panepinto  
Administrative Judge

## Letter From the Administrative Judge

Decisions made in the Family Court Division affect the very core of our society — the family. The Division's dedicated judges and staff are motivated in their work by principles intended to foster the well-being and best interests of our children, and their families and communities. Access to the courts of the Family Division provides, in a very real sense, a foundation for the future.

In the Juvenile Branch, the "Balanced Approach Restorative Justice" promulgated through recent amendments to the Juvenile Act, elicited programmatic responses that broadened the focus of attention to reflect renewed concerns for victims and communities in addition to the offender. The Victim and Community Service Unit, partnering Probation and Police Officers, and initiation of neighborhood Truancy Courts serve to address the needs of the community, provide a high profile presence on the street, and coordinate several agencies working from community-based service centers: prime examples of access to justice.

The Domestic Relations Branch continues to respond to ever-increasing public service access needs through enhanced automated case processing, a new Customer Service Unit, increased support collections, and a Custody Master system to better address the sensitive issues pertaining to children of separating, divorcing, and unmarried parents. Harking in new era in Family Law, Domestic Relations judges and employees have also recognized the Court's evolving role in dealing with the impact of Welfare Reform on children and families by helping unemployed Domestic Relations case member parents find job opportunities and training programs through the "Networking-for-Jobs" program.

Through the commitment and tireless efforts of Family Division Judges and Staff, innovative programming, and community involvement, more people than ever before are participating in the judicial process in Philadelphia. By granting greater access they are truly laying a "Foundation for the Future."

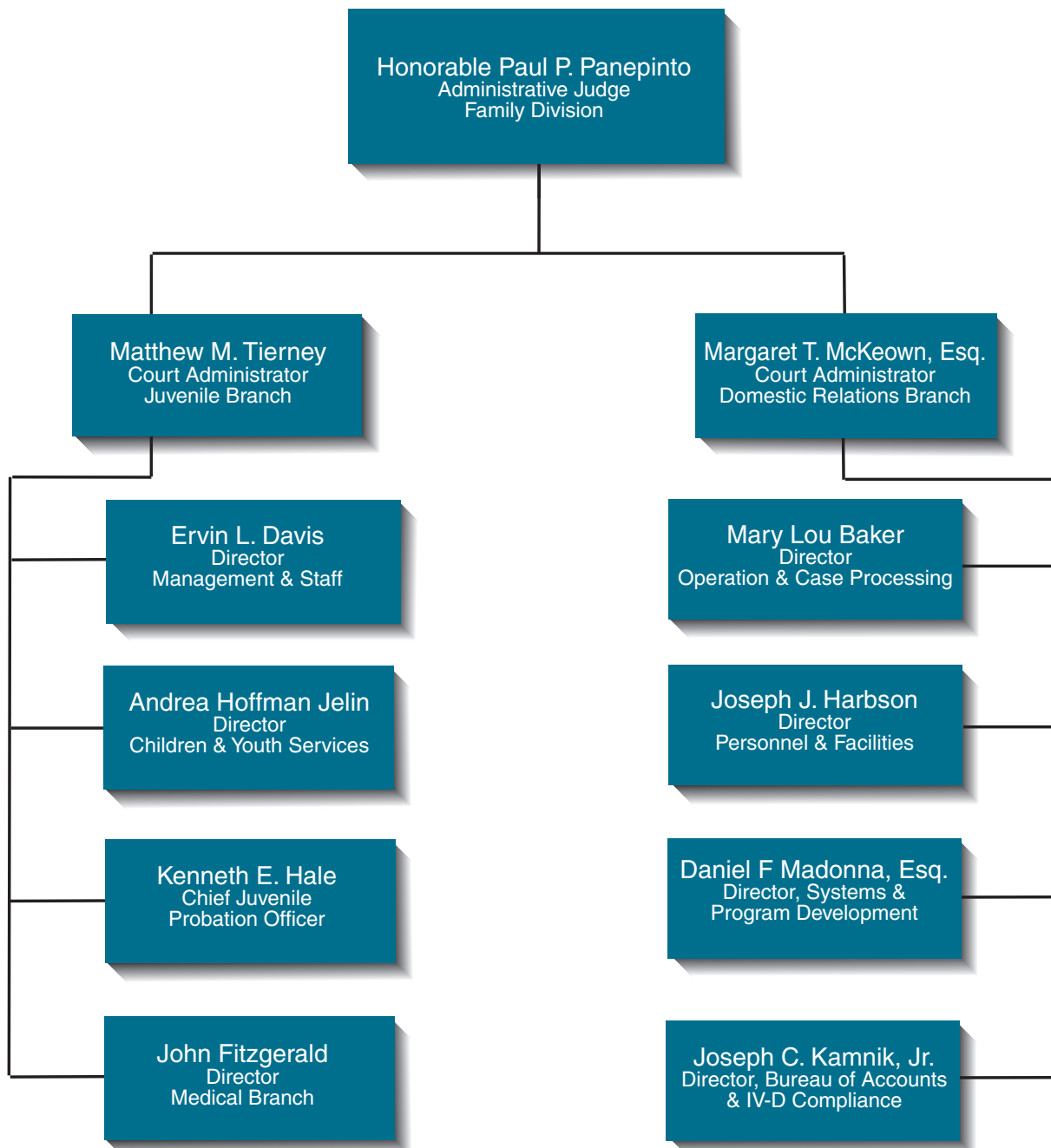
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## OVERVIEW

The Family Division of the Court of Common Pleas, is the next to largest divisional court of the First Judicial District (FJD), relative to the number of judges and employees. During the 1996-1997 Biennium, the Family Division received and processed almost 147,000 total filings. In addition, in the interest of child and family subjects of delinquency and dependency petitions, to safeguard victims and communities, and to further ensure access, tens of thousands of review hearings are conducted each year to monitor existing cases.

Effective January 1, 1969, an amendment to the judiciary article of the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1874 provided for a Family Court Division of the Court of Common Pleas, creating a Family Court structure and procedures based in part upon those of the former County Court of Philadelphia. The Juvenile Branch has jurisdiction over Juvenile Delinquency, Dependency, and Adoptions cases, while the Domestic Relations Branch is responsible for proceedings pertaining to Divorce, Child and Spousal Support, Child Custody, and Protection from Abuse cases.

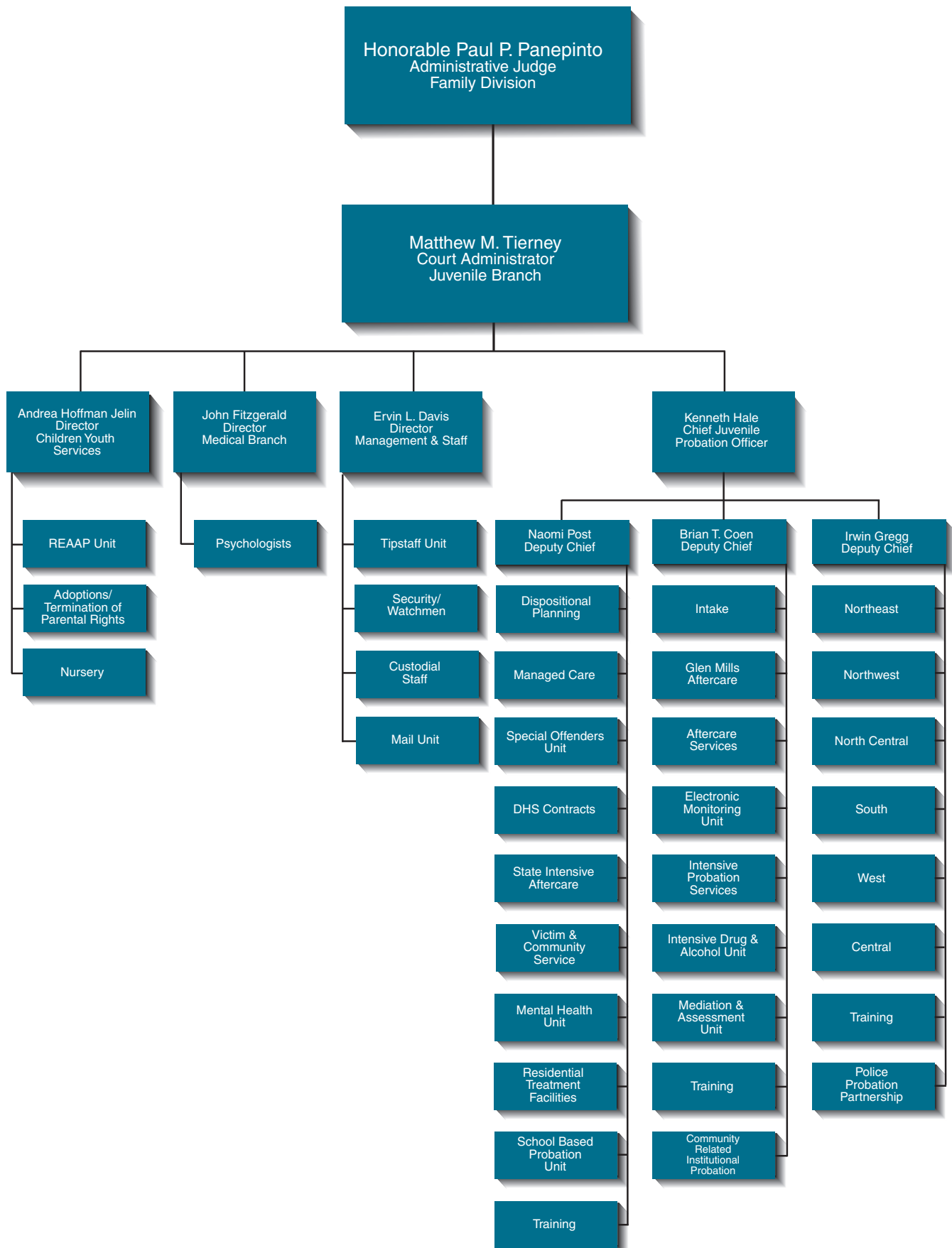
Administrative Judge Paul P. Panepinto oversees all facets of Family Division management and operations. The Domestic Relations and Juvenile Branches are each managed by a Court Administrator: Margaret T. McKeown, Esquire, in the Domestic Relations Branch; and Matthew M. Tierney for the Juvenile Branch. They report to Administrative Judge Panepinto, and also respond to the directives of FJD Court Administrator Joseph J. DiPrimio, Esquire. Aside from the Administrative Judge, 21 judges preside in the Family Division. Of these, 10 are assigned to the Juvenile Bench, and 11 preside in Domestic Relations cases.

The 836 employees of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Branches have kept pace with increasing demands for access in their respective fields. Judges, managers, and employees of both branches employ case management techniques bringing cases to swift, fair resolutions. Domestic Relations Branch judges and employees take useful advantage of a three-tiered system of hearings before masters and judges to resolve often difficult, and always sensitive cases. Improvements continue to transform processes making them more user friendly and efficient through enhanced access, educational programs, state of the art scientific DNA testing, and streamlined case management systems. Also, the Domestic Relations Branch continues to receive accolades for record-setting performances in obtaining support money for children and ushering families off the welfare roles.

In the Juvenile Branch, increasing numbers of cases are disposed earlier — at the pre-trial level. Further, the judges, management, and staff of the Juvenile Branch have responded to strident legislative and public mandates for more aggressive approaches to juvenile crime. Together, they have fashioned innovative programs that provide for more stringent sanctions for juvenile offenders, while involving and paying heed to victim and neighborhood sensitivities to a greater degree than ever before.

Though the workforce is relatively large, the hundreds of staff are widely viewed as concerned and conscientious individuals, supported by forward looking leadership. They are fully aware that the successful execution of their duties helps to bolster the current and future strength of families and neighborhoods in Philadelphia.

## Juvenile Branch Organization





Matthew M. Tierney  
Court Administrator  
Juvenile Branch

## ORGANIZATION

From their location at 1801 Vine Street overlooking Logan Square, judges and employees of the Juvenile Court Branch of the Family Division administer juvenile delinquency and dependency cases, and criminal cases where adults have been charged with crimes against minors.

Led by Family Division Administrative Judge Paul P. Panepinto, Matthew M. Tierney is the Administrator of Juvenile Court overseeing the workings of the four main divisions of the court: 1) the Management and Staff Office; 2) Children and Youth Services; 3) the Medical Branch; and 4) the Juvenile Probation Department. The Juvenile Branch has roughly 375 employees, of whom 325 are assigned to the Probation Department under the leadership of Chief Probation Officer Kenneth E. Hale.

## PURPOSE

Juvenile Court Branch employees and judges provide administrative, adjudicative and dispositive services for the juveniles, families, schools, and the neighborhood communities of Philadelphia. Working through a global approach in collaboration with other juvenile welfare and justice agencies and institutions, the Court utilizes an array of administrative tools and programmatic responses tailored to improve the quality of life of the citizenry of the City and the individuals who comprise it. In this endeavor, an impressive number of initiatives are employed to further access to justice.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

Most of the volume of the work of the Juvenile Court concerns two major case type categories: Delinquency cases and Dependency cases. During the biennium, almost 25,000 new delinquency and dependency petitions were filed. Delinquency petitions are filed against juveniles aged 10 to 17, charged with what would be considered misdemeanor or felony violations of criminal law had they been committed by an adult. Dependency petitions are filed on behalf of children who may be found to be suffering from abuse, neglect, or inadequate care. Dependent courts administer the legal steps to improve care of children in the home and, in the alternative, adoption — including requisite termination of parental rights. Dependent Courts also have jurisdiction over “status” offenders including truants, and juveniles accused of incorrigibility by their families. Activities of the Juvenile Court are governed in part, by Title 42, Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes §6301 et seq. (the Juvenile Act). In adult criminal cases involving child victims, Juvenile Court Judges preside over adult trials for misdemeanor charges and preliminary hearings for felony charges.

**Delinquency:** New delinquency petitions for juveniles arrested by Police are filed by the court’s Delinquent Intake Unit, based at the Youth Study Center (YSC) juvenile detention facility. Located at 20<sup>th</sup> Street and Benjamin Franklin Parkway, the YSC is open 24 hours a day. Once arrested juveniles are held in detention, trials must be scheduled for a date within the ensuing 10 day period. If *not* held in





Senior Judge Joseph C. Bruno

custody, a Pre-Trial Hearing is scheduled, followed by an Adjudicatory (trial) Hearing. Juveniles are adjudicated delinquent as a result of judicial findings affirming one or more of the allegations. In these cases, youths are placed on probation or committed to residential facilities, the latter usually followed by aftercare probation. Juvenile Probation Officers provide personal supervision and monitor the delivery of delinquent intervention services from agencies funded through the City Department of Human Services (DHS). Review Hearings are required on a regular basis for minors in residential placement to measure progress and determine suitability for discharge. Review Hearings are also held in response to motions alleging probation violations and other problems.

**Dependency:** Most dependency cases are initiated by DHS in response to allegations of child maltreatment. Some cases are referred by the School District because of truancy. Also, a parent may file an incorrigibility petition. If the Court adjudicates a child dependent (upon the Court), DHS may be ordered to accept custody of the involved child(ren) or to provide in-home supervision and services for the family.

Review Hearings are held regularly for children in foster care to monitor progress toward a court-ordered goal — generally reunification with the family — or conversely, adoption.

### ACHIEVEMENTS

A policy was established in 1996 to dispose of more delinquent cases at the Pre-Trial Hearing stage. This improvement generated 1,511 Pre-Trial Hearing dispositions in 1996. The additional 849 dispositions represented a 128% increase over the 662 Pre-Trial dispositions in 1995. In 1997, 1,454 cases were completed at the Pre-Trial stage, maintaining previous gains in expedience and benefitting access to justice.

Also, 1996 saw the adoption of a one family/one judge policy. In Juvenile Court, a judge disposing of a case is also assigned any subsequent hearings. As a result, most Review Hearings in both Delinquent and Dependent Courts are assigned to the judge most familiar with the family — the one who adjudicated the original case. This practice provides continuity of decisions within each case and family, serves to instill public confidence, and supports access to the Courts.

Judge Nicholas  
M. D'Alessandro

Judge Murray C. Goldman



Judge Richard J. Gordon, Jr.



Judge James Murray Lynn

Moreover, significant access to justice developments are presented below in a special section under the heading “*Major Access to Justice Developments in 1996-1997.*”

## DEPARTMENTS

**Probation Department:** The Probation Department provides staff services to delinquent and dependent Court operations, and supervision services to delinquent and some dependent youths. The department operates the Delinquent Intake Unit, places juveniles in various intervention programs, and works to restore the victim and the community affected by crime. Court Liaison Officers in delinquent courtrooms and Court Representatives in dependent courtrooms provide essential information and immediately enter dispositional information into the Court mainframe computer. Probation officers supervise delinquents in the community and help to prepare institutionalized youths for their return to their families and communities.

**Medical Branch:** Headed by John Fitzgerald, Medical Branch staff psychologists conduct mental health assessments of juveniles for the Court.

Staff psychologists examine, diagnose, and recommend treatment for clients referred by other branches of the Court or ordered by the judiciary. Professional findings support the judicial decision making process.

**Children and Youth:** Under the guidance of Andrea Hoffman Jelin, Children and Youth staff work with truants, incorrigibles, and their families. Their important work helps to preserve families and stabilize behavior. Individuals, their families, schools, and communities benefit as a result. In addition, preemptive intervention and diversion from further Court involvement address emerging problems limiting the potential for escalation into more serious conduct. Truancy issues have come to the forefront as a portent to antisocial behavior, and Juvenile Court judges, administration, and staff are vigilant in addressing this problem through innovative and cooperative programs seeking to stem truancy and related problems.

**Management and Staff Office:** With direction provided by Ervin Davis, this office provides assistance and guidance with budgetary and personnel concerns that underlie virtually all other facets of Juvenile Court operations.



Judge Thomas Dempsey



Judge Lillian Harris Ransom



Judge Abram Frank Reynolds



Judge Edward R. Summers

## MAJOR ACCESS TO JUSTICE DEVELOPMENTS IN 1996-97

### ***Juvenile Law Changes – Delinquency:***

In 1996, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania adopted a new approach to juvenile delinquency, the *Balanced and Restorative Justice Model*, in the pursuit of three goals: 1) accountability of the offender to the victim and community; 2) public safety; and 3) development of competencies for juvenile offenders. This approach involves the community and the victim as clients with an interest and standing in the system, *along with* the offender. The strategy improves communication and widens public access to justice. Public confidence in the Court is also advanced. A Balanced and Restorative Justice Working Team of probation staff and others, including stakeholders from various agencies of the Philadelphia juvenile justice and victim service systems, is working to incorporate this philosophy into their policies and programs. Several new programs incorporating a balanced juvenile justice philosophy have been instituted by the juvenile probation department.

Other recent changes in Juvenile Law have affected the Court in a number of ways. Felony adjudicatory hearings have been opened to the public. School principals are provided with Juvenile Court delinquency history information when their students are adjudicated delinquent. Juvenile sex offenders must provide a blood specimen for future DNA identification purposes. Individuals reaching the age of 21 with unpaid juvenile restitution obligations are

subject to the imposition of civil judgments to facilitate payment of restitution even after juvenile Court jurisdiction ends. While youths arrested for violent felonies armed with a deadly weapon are initially excluded from Juvenile Court jurisdiction, they may be transferred to Juvenile Court from adult Criminal Court through Decertification Hearings, when in the public interest.

### ***Victim and Community Services***

**Unit:** With funding from a state grant program designed to help juvenile courts and agencies implement the Balanced and Restorative Justice Model, the Court created the Victim and Community Services Program in 1997. This probation program works to restore victims and their neighborhoods through the imposition of restitution and community service, and the continuing development of more victim and community sensitive Court programs and policies. Probation officers are working to create more community service projects with key City agencies and local community groups. A Victim Restoration Fund is being established with public and private donations to enable indigent juveniles to earn money and pay court-ordered restitution through public service. A Victim Advisory Board works with the Victim Programs Coordinator to produce more comprehensive programs for victims and offenders attending to victim needs and concerns.

**Special Offenders Unit:** To promote public safety and to tackle the often weighty rehabilitative needs of juvenile sex offenders and juveniles with serious mental illness, the Special Offenders Unit was created in 1997, also with

financial assistance from the state. Juveniles adjudicated delinquent for sexual assaults and molestation of children are treated in inpatient and outpatient programs supervised by probation officers trained to work with this population. Special supervision is also provided for offenders with major psychiatric disorders.

**Firearm Violators Program:** In response to ongoing concern over juvenile shootings and related weapons and other offenses, an intervention program was created by the Court and DHS for juveniles adjudicated delinquent for possession of firearms. This day treatment program is intended to prevent youths found with a gun from further involvement in firearms incidents.

**Police-Probation Partnership:** In 1997, the Juvenile Aid Division of the Philadelphia Police Department and the Juvenile Probation Department began a joint program in which a probation officer makes field visits accompanied by a police officer in a police vehicle. This public safety-oriented program targets noncompliant, fugitive, and high-risk juveniles, who are visited day and night at homes and neighborhood hangouts where juveniles congregate — highlighting the Court's presence in the community.

**School-Based Probation Unit:** This program stations probation officers in schools to supervise students on probation. Over a dozen high schools and middle schools have resident probation officers. Through their daily presence, probation officers and school staff monitor attendance, grades, and behavioral problems on site. In November of 1997 the School Based Probation Unit was named as the Juvenile Court

Judges' Commission "Outstanding Court-Operated Program" in Pennsylvania for its operation at the Michael J. Gavaghan Memorial Village Prep School. This school, named for the late Juvenile Chief Probation Officer, works intensively with juveniles on probation, some of whom present severe truancy and learning problems.

**Juvenile Law Changes – Dependency Combined Goal Change and Termination of Parental Rights:** In March of 1996 the Court instituted a new policy for foster children when the goal of the proceedings is to be changed from family reunification to adoption. Rather than scheduling separate events for goal change and termination of parental rights, these hearings are combined into one event. This change eliminated at least one step and attendant unnecessary delay, saving an average of 18 months in the adoption process. In 1996, 410 adoptions were finalized, and in 1997, 556 adoptions were completed — an increase of 36%, or 146 cases. In 1996, parental rights were terminated for 551 mothers and 547 fathers. In 1997, parental rights were terminated for 898 mothers and 886 fathers — increases of approximately 62%.

**CASA Volunteers:** In 1996, the Court authorized the introduction of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) to assist judges, court-appointed attorneys, and others in determining the best courses of action for proceeding in difficult dependency cases. CASA volunteers undergo extensive pre-service training to qualify for certification as special advocates.

**Court Improvement Program:** In September of 1996, Juvenile Court received a federal grant to evaluate the

needs of juvenile Dependency Courts throughout Pennsylvania. The project involves: 1) a statewide survey of Court and child welfare practitioners; and 2) in selected counties, staff interviews of officials, observations of Court operations, and review of Court records. Findings are expected to provide extensive recommendations for improvement of the operations of Dependency Courts in the state.

***Juvenile Court Training Center:***

In 1997 the Court established a training center including a facility large enough to accommodate most staff training sessions, a law and resources library, and an audiovisual center.

### JUVENILE COURT CASELOADS

This text and the accompanying statistical tables and graphs that follow show that the Juvenile Court Branch disposes of new cases at about the same rate at which they are received. In addition to adjudicative and dispositive court events, a substantial inventory of delinquent and dependent cases receive periodic formal review by judges and masters. Review hearings serve to ensure the welfare of the child subjects of the proceedings, and to monitor the

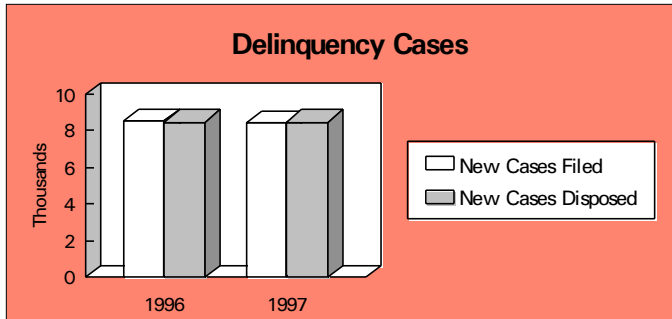
stability of their familial, neighborhood, and school environments.

In 1996 the delinquent courts disposed of 8,506 new cases and conducted 27,803 Review Hearings.

In 1996 the dependent courts disposed of 4,466 new cases and conducted 26,951 Review Hearings. The new cases included 931 cases that were disposed without a hearing — mostly incorrigibility cases that were provided social service interventions in lieu of filing a petition. In 1996 judges committed 1,483 children to the Department of Human Services for foster care and 323 children for in-home supervision.

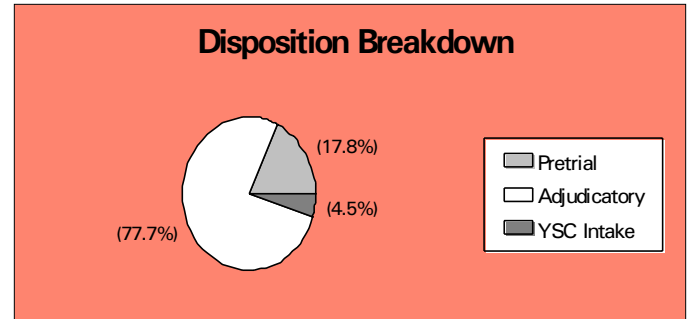
In 1997 the delinquent courts disposed of 8,506 new cases and 26,019 Review Hearings. The number of 1997 new case dispositions was exactly the same as in 1996 — 8,506 — but slightly more juveniles were adjudicated delinquent.

In 1997 the dependent courts disposed of 4,911 new cases — an increase of roughly 10% over 1996 — including 848 without hearings. New commitments to the Department of Human Services for foster care increased to 1,812 and for in-home supervision to 456. Review Hearings decreased to 22,651.

**Delinquency Cases**

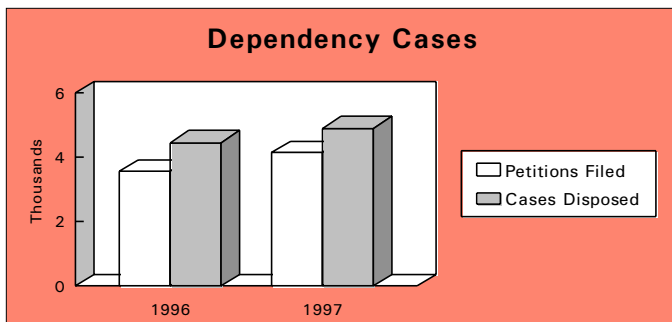
**1996 1997**

New Cases Filed	8,539	8,466
New Cases Disposed	8,506	8,506

**Disposition Breakdown**

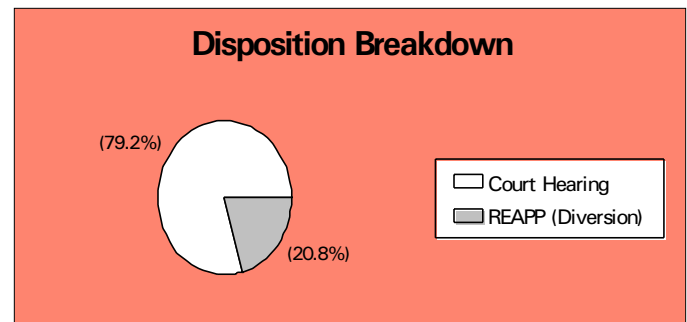
*Pretrial Adjudicatory YSC Intake*

1996	1,511	6,609	386
1997	1,457	6,831	218

**Dependency Cases**

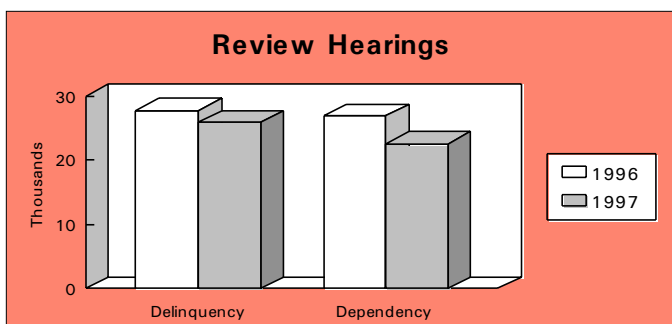
**1996 1997**

New Cases Filed	3,568	4,164
New Cases Disposed	4,466	4,911

**Disposition Breakdown**

*Court Hearing REAPP (Diversion)*

1996	3,535	931
1997	4,063	848

**Review Hearings**

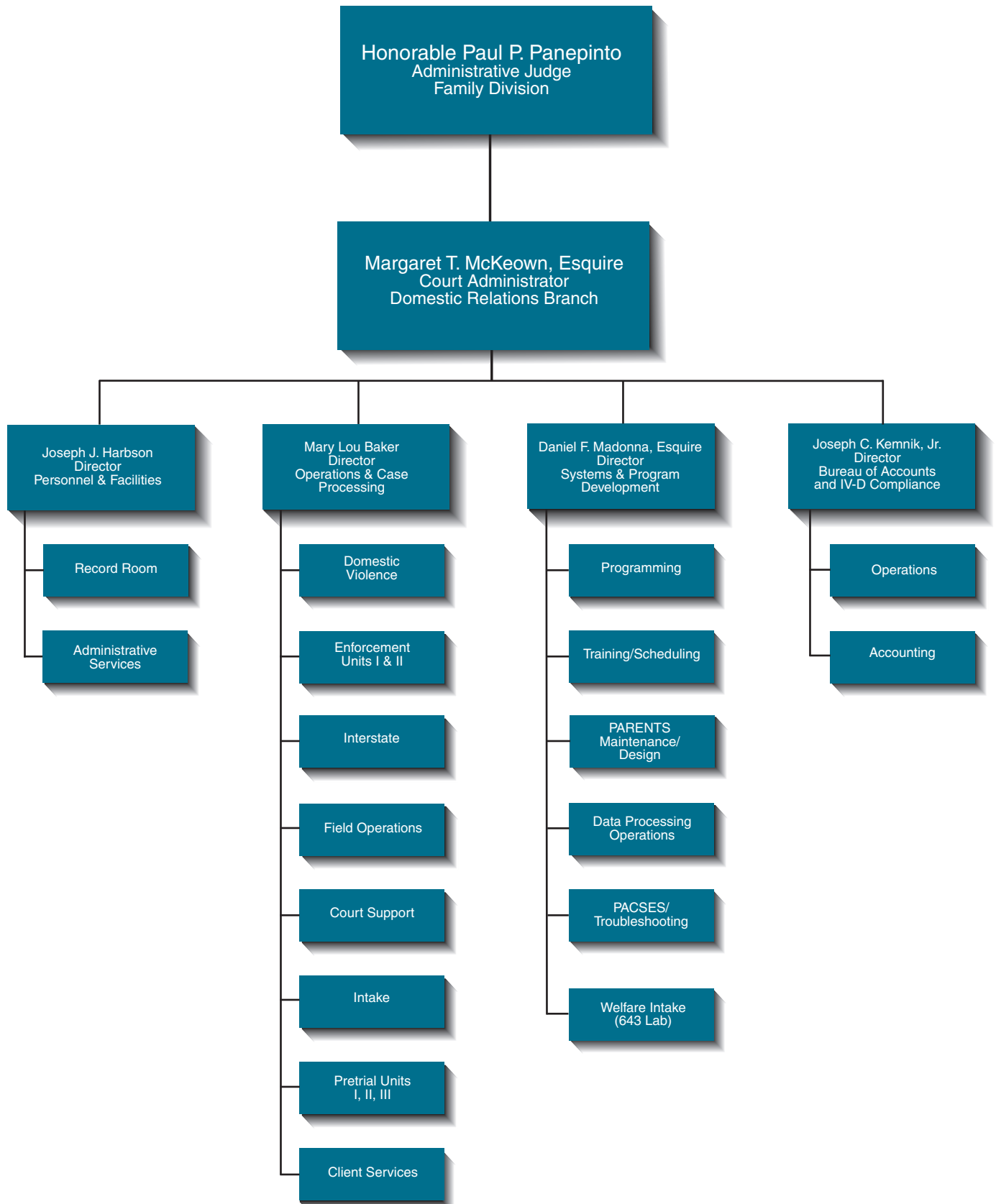
*(Cases With Ongoing Court Activity)*

*Delinquency Dependency*

1996	27,803	26,951
1997	26,019	22,651



## Domestic Relations Branch Organization





Margaret T. McKeown, Esquire  
Court Administrator  
Domestic Relations Branch

## OVERVIEW & ORGANIZATION

Under the leadership of Family Division Administrative Judge Paul P. Panepinto, eleven judges of the Court of Common Pleas preside in the Domestic Relations Branch of the Family Court Division. From their location at 34 South 11<sup>th</sup> Street, approximately 300 administrative, professional and support staff are organized into 5 broad groups. The Domestic Relations Branch Court Administrator, Margaret T. McKeown, Esquire, supervises four departments, each headed by a director, as well as groups of divorce, custody, and support masters and others under her direct purview. The four other departments are: 1) Personnel and Facilities; 2) Operations and Case Processing; 3) Systems and Program Development; and 4) the Bureau of Accounts and IV-D Compliance.

## PURPOSE

Personnel endeavor to efficiently administer cases involving paternity establishment, child and spousal support, divorce, child custody, and domestic violence. Toward that end, the Court utilizes modern case management principals that encourage early resolution through cooperative preparation and agreement, facilitated by specially appointed masters. Employees are mindful of the sensitive nature of these types of proceedings, and through their endeavors, further guarantee access to justice for a population especially in need of that assurance. In 1996 and 1997 a total of 122,016 pleadings were filed with the Domestic Relations Branch, including 35,803 new complaints.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

The Court has varied responsibilities in responding to complaints that can be broadly categorized under four major, and sometimes interrelated case types: 1) Child and Spousal Support; 2) Divorce; 3) Child Custody; and 4) Domestic Violence.

**Support:** Child and spousal support case processes have three components: 1) establishment of paternity; 2) determination of the support obligation; and 3) enforcement.

**Paternity:** Support cases begin with Complaints for Support filed in the office of the Clerk of Family Court or in the Family Court's Intake Unit. For children born out of wedlock, establishment of the paternity is the first step toward determining the child support obligation. Often paternity is established by agreement of the father. However, if paternity is disputed, the Court may employ scientific DNA testing and other evidence to enter a judicial finding of paternity. The Court can enter a support order for a child only after paternity has been established.

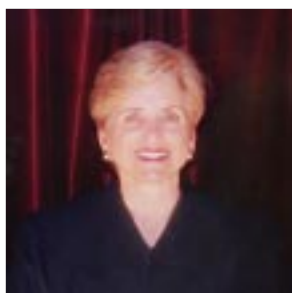
**Obligation:** In determining the support obligation, Philadelphia is known as a "three tier" county. Depending upon the issues and adversarial postures of the parties involved, the Pennsylvania Rules of Civil Procedure provide for three layers of hearing for Complaints for Support: 1) before pre-trial conference officers, who are not required to be attorneys; 2) before Permanent Hearing Officers who *are* required to be attorneys; and 3) before Family Court Judges of the Court of Common Pleas. This tiered system allows the Domestic Relations branch to more efficiently process support cases

*Domestic Relations Branch*

Judge Gwendolyn N. Bright

Senior Judge  
Nicholas A. Cipriani

Judge Levan Gordon



Judge Joyce S. Mozenter



Judge Shelley Robins-New



Judge Rosalyn K. Robinson

and establish support orders. Each of the two lower levels of hearing can reduce by negotiation, agreements, and Proposed Orders, the number of cases that might require judicial hearing.

**Enforcement:** Once the support order is entered, collection is usually effected through Court-ordered attachment of the income of the support obligor (the person responsible to pay). With income attachment, a certain amount is regularly deducted from the payer's income by their employer or other income provider who then forwards it to the Branch. The Court, in turn, forwards the payment to the support obligee (the intended recipient). However, if the support obligor defaults, or their source of income refuses to comply with the attachment order, compliance is also achieved through the efforts of enforcement conference officers and judges. Support cases reach the Enforcement Unit either through complaints or when delinquent accounts are identified through regular monitoring performed by the Court PARENTS computer system. The Enforcement Unit uses several administrative mechanisms to compel payment. If these fail, Enforcement Unit Conference Officers file Petitions for Contempt on behalf of the obligees, to bring the obligor before a judge. Petitions for Contempt are also

filed with the Clerk of Family Court by attorneys. In deciding a Petition for Contempt, judges can utilize an array of administrative and judicial responses to obtain compliance; and may ultimately imprison a person found in contempt for having failed to comply with a Court order.

**Divorce:** The Domestic Relations Branch also has jurisdiction over all facets of divorce proceedings. These include the entry of divorce decrees and annulments, and economic claims arising from divorce actions — including equitable distribution, the division of marital property, and alimony issues. The Clerk of Family Court receives and docket all legal documents relating to these actions. Permanent Divorce Masters conduct initial hearings on economic claims. In cases not resolved before the Permanent Master in Divorce, an appeal may be taken for a *de novo* hearing before a Family Court Judge.

**Child Custody:** The resolution of child custody disputes is one of the more sensitive and emotionally charged functions of the Domestic Relations Branch. Child custody cases begin similarly to support actions: with the filing of a complaint in the office of the Clerk of Family Court, or in the Custody Intake Unit. In 1997, complaints began to be referred to the new Custody

Masters Unit, where conferences or hearings are conducted by Custody Masters, who are attorneys. Using Branch Probation Officers' home investigation reports, and, relying on negotiation, mediation and fact-finding, Custody Masters make recommendations to the Court for orders governing custody, partial custody, and visitation of children. The skill, compassion, and judgment of Custody Masters and the judges whom they advise, help to ensure that the best interests of children and their families are served.

**Domestic Violence:** The Domestic Relations Branch also administers Pennsylvania's Protection From Abuse Act. Under the authority of this Act, Domestic Relations Branch Judges hear cases involving domestic violence between family members, or between parties who have had an intimate relationship. In response to Petitions for Protection from Abuse filed in the Domestic Violence Unit by attorneys or victims of abuse, judges can enter orders that bar offenders from any further contact with victims. The Act also grants judges authority to fashion the terms of an order in many other ways that they feel can best stop the abuse.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

In 1996 and 1997 there were several important developments in the Branch allowing the Court to better utilize available resources to administer the functions described above, and therefore, to broaden access to justice for the public that the Branch is intended to serve. These include:

**Expansion of the Domestic Violence Unit:** In order to function properly, families also need to be free from abuse and the threat of abuse. The Domestic Violence Unit files petitions on behalf of victims, so that victims can obtain Protection From Abuse Orders restraining abusers from further violence. In 1996 the Branch expanded the Domestic Violence Unit in response to an increasing number of abuse complaints. The unit was moved to larger office space, and four additional case interviewers were added to the staff. The *Latino Domestic Violence Program* was established in conjunction with staff from *Women Against Abuse*, to assist Spanish speaking victims in understanding and proceeding through the process.

**Establishment of the "643" Processing Unit:** An important mission of the Domestic Relations Branch is to ensure



Judge Ida K. Chen



Judge Idee C. Fox



Judge Leonard A. Ivanoski



Judge Edward E. Russell



Judge Thomas D. Watkins



Judge Jerome A. Zaleski

that children receive financial support so that the family can emerge from dependence on Public Assistance. To better accomplish this mission, in May of 1996 the Domestic Relations Branch established a new unit, the sole function of which is to process “643” referrals from the Department of Public Welfare (DPW). The “643” is the form that DPW uses to alert the Court to a new welfare recipient child, one of whose parents is not residing in the household. Upon receipt of the 643 referral, the Court can proceed to file a Complaint for Support against the parent who is absent from the household. Financial support gained from this process allows many families to become financially independent, and to enjoy many of the things in life which intact families take for granted.

**Work Begins Toward Expanded Customer Services Unit:** By the end of 1997, renovations to enable the Bureau of Accounts to move from the first to the fourth floor of 34 S. 11<sup>th</sup> Street were nearly complete. Completion of this construction will pave the way for transformation of the former offices of the Bureau of Accounts into a greatly expanded Customer Service Unit. The new Customer Service Unit will be the gateway through which clients and other concerned parties may obtain the information they need to address their Domestic Relations issues. In addition to its former responsibilities relating to payment processing and other financial items, the expanded unit will communicate with individuals and agencies on all other aspects of Domestic Relations.

Also, the Branch has initiated two other major changes that have improved the manner in which the Court’s business is conducted and increased the numbers of people served — strengthening the commitment to access to justice:

**Change from Blood Draw to Buccal Swab Testing:** Increases in the birthrate to unmarried couples have underscored the importance of establishing paternity at the beginning of a support action. Formerly, this process had involved drawing blood from both parents and the child — an often difficult ordeal. In 1996, advances in medical technology allowed the Court to switch to *Buccal Swab Testing* — a non-invasive procedure that entails gently stroking the lining of the inner cheeks of the parties to collect cells found in saliva. These cells contain the genetic material that can be used to determine paternity. Buccal Swab Testing is less painful and time consuming, and greatly enhances the Court’s ability to take the first step in establishing the support order.

**Establishment of Custody Master’s Unit:** The Custody Master’s Unit was established in the Spring of 1997 to expedite processing of custody petitions. Similar to the Support Master’s Program, the Custody Master’s Program is designed to resolve custody issues not requiring judicial intervention. This frees up precious judicial resources to conduct the custody, support, and domestic violence hearings where judicial action *is* required. Custody Masters are attorneys licensed in Pennsylvania. They take testimony and enter proposed custody orders, as well as orders providing interim relief. In addition, Masters make referrals for Custody Mediation, accept Stipulations of Custody, and issue orders for telephone testimony. Depending upon the relief sought, Custody Masters preside over conferences or hearings, pursuant to Administrative Regulation 97-2 and Pa.R.C.P. 1915.4-2.

For all initial custody petitions, and for all cases where sole custody is at issue, the Custody Masters conduct pre-

trial conferences to determine the positions and requests of the parties, as well as whether any special services such as home studies or mental health assessments are required. Cases are then referred to Judges for full evidentiary hearings. For cases where petitioners seek to gain partial custody or to modify visitation schedules of existing orders, Custody Masters preside over evidentiary hearings.

**Record Collections for Child Support:** The Philadelphia Family Court's Domestic Relations Division under the leadership of Administrative Judge Paul P. Panepinto and Domestic Relations Court Administrator Margaret T. McKeown, Esquire closed 1997 with a new record total of \$138,042,009 in support collections. Support collections increased more than 11.5% from 1996 with a total increase of \$14,187,823. In comparison, collections in 1987 totaled \$73,761,914, with an increase over the last ten years of more than 87%, or \$64,280,095. The Domestic Relations Division continues to explore and develop new and innovative procedures to increase collection and more efficiently process the large urban caseload.

## DEPARTMENTS

**Personnel and Facilities:** Under Director Joseph J. Harbison, Record Room staff maintain domestic relations files and the Administrative Services Unit is responsible for building security, mail distribution, and supplies. Importantly, Mr. Harbison is a First Judicial District Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator responding to requests for ADA accommodations and increasing access to the Court.

**Operations and Case Processing:** Headed by Mary Lou Baker, the Operations and Case Processing Department

includes among others, a Writ Servers' Unit that performs personal service of legal process upon parties required to appear in Court, the Parent Locator Service Unit that locates absent parents in child support, custody, and parental kidnaping cases, and the Bench Warrant Unit that apprehends individuals against whom bench warrants have been lodged. Also included here are the Court Support Unit that provides staff for the Court rooms and the Interstate Unit which processes support establishment and enforcement complaints when the support obligor resides in another jurisdiction. For 1996-1997, new developments in this department included:

**Systems and Program Development:** The Systems and Program Development group, directed by Daniel F. Madonna, Esquire, includes the PARENTS Support and Development Unit to assist users of the Court's PARENTS computer system. This unit is also responsible for the design and development of enhancements to the PARENTS system. In addition, the Data Processing Unit provides statistical reports, maintains the hardware required to run PARENTS, and programs enhancements to the PARENTS system. This Department also houses one of the Biennial Report Access to Justice initiatives:

- Establishment of the "643" Processing Unit — In 1996, the Systems and Program Development Department's "643" Department of Public Welfare (DPW) Unit was formed to ensure that children receive financial support so that families can emerge from dependence on Public Assistance.

**Bureau of Accounts and IV-D Compliance:** The Bureau of Accounts and IV-D Compliance maintains all



financial records and distributes payments. Aside from the department's responsibilities as the financial control center, 1998 will see the department's role expanded to focus on customer service through at least one development:

- Expansion to include a Customer Service Unit — Completion of renovations begun during the Biennial Report period at 34 S. 11<sup>th</sup> Street will pave the way for transformation of the former offices of the Bureau of Accounts into a greatly expanded Customer Service Unit.

**Specialized Units:** The Domestic Relations Branch also has several other specialized units that provide support services for the Branch. Among them is a special unit of the Philadelphia Sheriff's Department located in the Branch that transports prisoners and provides courtroom security. In addition, through a cooperative agreement with the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office, the Assistant District Attorneys of the Child Support Enforcement Unit represent the Department of Public Welfare at Court hearings in which DPW is a party in interest, and in some interstate cases.

## MOVING FROM TODAY TOWARD TOMORROW

The Branch continuously strives to streamline and improve its existing processes. Refinements and expansion of PARENTS, the Court's automated child support computer system, are ongoing. Acting now with an eye toward the future, the Branch has established a number of standing committees that are charged with evaluating new and existing processes and tech-

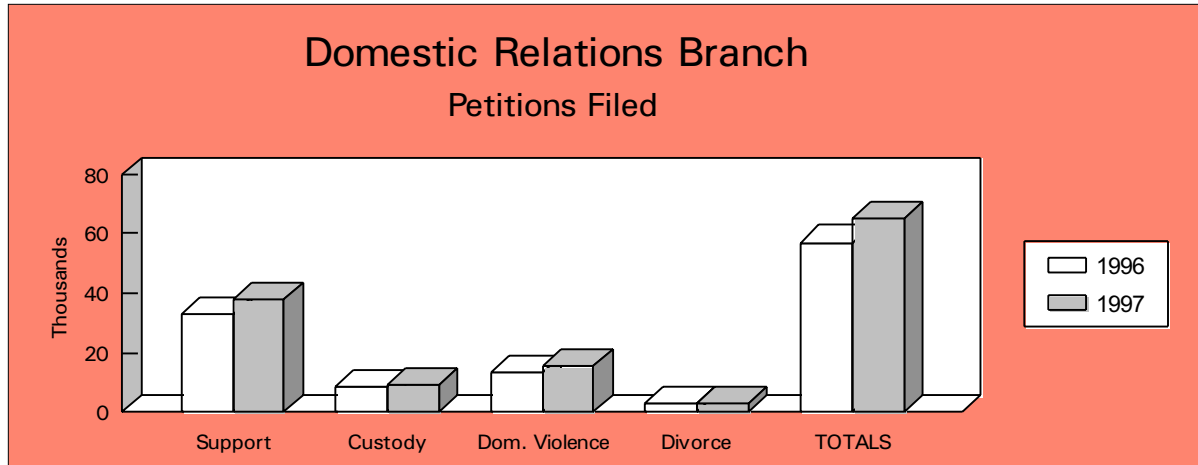
nologies.

**The Staff Development and Communications Committee** was formed to improve staff training, solicit staff input for improving Branch operations, and streamline problem identification and resolution.

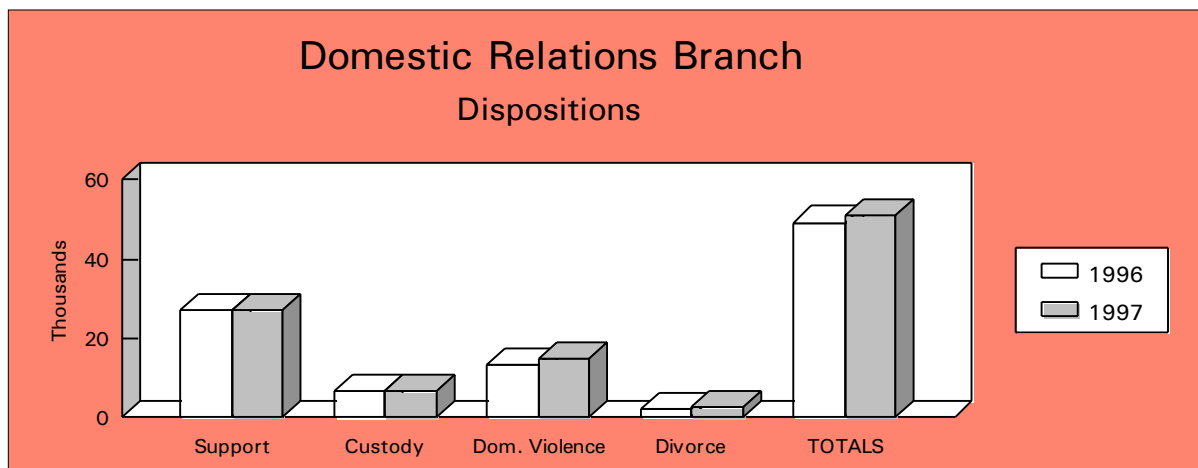
**The Video Technology Committee** has developed instructional videos for clients to view in the waiting rooms of the Custody, Domestic Violence, Interstate, and Pre-Trial units. Through the use of role playing and standard lecture, these videos are designed to provide clients with the information they need to understand the process they are going through, and to understand what the Court will require of them in order to efficiently move their case forward. This knowledge reduces client anxiety, and helps to insure fair and just results.

**The Automation Technology Committee** was instituted to evaluate existing technologies in use by the Branch, and explore how newer technologies may be utilized to enhance productivity and further the goals and objectives of the Branch, including access to justice.

**The Courthouse Operations Committee** is designed to address the concerns of staff and the public that relate to the physical facility in which the Domestic Relations Branch is located. These issues include building security, admissions policy and staff morale.

**Petitions Filed**

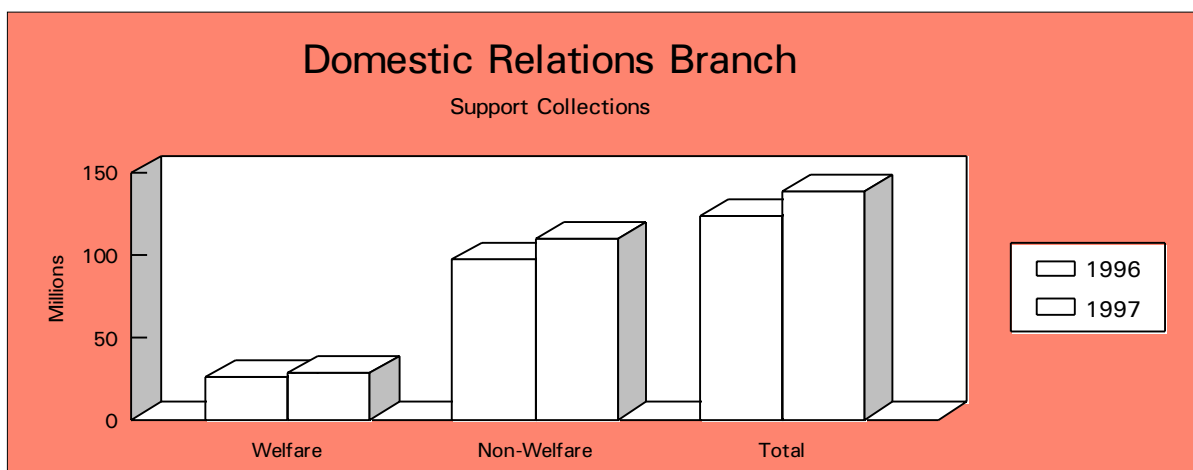
	<i>Support</i>	<i>Custody</i>	<i>Dom. Violence</i>	<i>Divorce</i>	<i>TOTALS</i>
1996	32,746	8,189	13,193	2,920	57,048
1997	37,759	8,958	15,167	3,084	64,968

**Petitions Disposed**

	<i>Support</i>	<i>Custody</i>	<i>Dom. Violence</i>	<i>Divorce</i>	<i>TOTALS</i>
1996	27,102	6,705	13,282	2,125	49,214
1997	27,048	6,557	14,730	2,604	50,939

*Domestic Relations Branch Statistics***Statistical Summary**

<i>Type of Case</i>	<i>Total Petitions Filed</i>	<i>By Court Hearing</i>	<i>Dispositions By Hearing Officer</i>	<i>By Masters</i>	<i>Total Dispositions</i>
Support	32,746	11,441	13,605	2,056	27,102
Custody	8,189	4,211	2,494		6,705
Domestic Violence	13,193	13,282			13,282
Divorce	2,920	2,125			2,125
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>57,048</b>	<b>31,059</b>	<b>16,099</b>	<b>2,056</b>	<b>49,214</b>

**Support Collections**

	<i>Welfare</i>	<i>Non-Welfare</i>	<i>Totals</i>
1996	\$26,216,048	\$97,538,138	\$123,854,186
1997	\$28,176,860	\$109,865,149	\$138,042,009



Petrese B. Tucker  
*Administrative Judge*

## Letter from the Administrative Judge

Judges and employees of the Orphans' Court Division of the Court of Common Pleas work within the context of their perceived mandate to ensure that the rights of the less fortunate are vigilantly guarded. Together, they work to protect the interests and carry out the wishes of those who may be incapable of doing so themselves: decedents; minors; and incapacitated persons. In doing so, the judiciary, and staff of the Orphans' Court provide access for a very special population whose voice might not otherwise be heard.

In Pennsylvania, the Orphans' Courts date back more than 300 years to the days when William Penn himself held an Orphans' Court in 1683. Over the intervening centuries the Court's responsibilities have evolved drastically, but, the aim is still the same: provide access to justice for vulnerable individuals.

Having been established at the dawn of the American system of justice, thriving today as a champion of judicial access, and assuming the mantle of responsibility for guaranteeing the future of its myriad clients, the Orphans' Court Division of the Court of Common Pleas represents "Access to Justice: A Foundation for the Future".

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Senior Judge Frank X. O'Brien

## ORGANIZATION

The 1968 amendment to the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1874 that delineated the Trial and Family Divisions also established Orphans' Court as one of the three divisions of the Court of Common Pleas of the First Judicial District. The Court is led by Administrative Judge Petrese B. Tucker. Judge Edmund S. Pawelec and Senior Judge Frank X. O'Brien round out the judicial complement for the Orphans' Court Division.

## PURPOSE

The main purpose of the Orphans' Court is to protect the personal and property rights of people who cannot do so themselves. This situation might arise because the person is deceased, in which case the Court's role is to protect as much as possible the decedent's wishes regarding the disposition of their assets; including monitoring the use of assets that are left for charitable purposes, and to ensure to the greatest extent possible that the charitable intent of the testator is carried out. The Court also has jurisdiction to intervene if a person is temporarily or permanently not competent to make decisions in their own best interests. These cases often involve minors and people with certain disabilities. Under these circumstances, the role of the judges of the Orphans' Court is to ensure that the best interests of these individuals are protected.

*A basic tenant of American jurisprudence is the role of judges to exercise their authority to render decisions that are just, and that protect the rights of all parties before them. This is access to justice in its purest form*

## RESPONSIBILITIES

Operating from their location at City Hall, the judges and 12 employees of the Common Pleas Court Orphans' Court Division work together to adjudicate, dispose, and administer matters concerning the management and distribution of the property or estates of decedents, minors and incapacitated persons. In addition, the Division conducts proceedings involving the supervision and distribution of property in trust, both

testamentary and *inter vivos* (between the living) as well as the settlement of accounts of administrators, executors, guardians, and trustees. The Court also rules on matters relating to inheritance and estate

taxation. Appeals from decisions of the Register of Wills, including so-called "will contests", are also taken in the Orphans' Court Division. The Division has jurisdiction over issues involving the administration and proper application of property committed to charitable purposes and held or controlled by a non-profit corporation. Matters relating to inheritance and estate tax issues are handled by the division.

**Approach to Access:** A basic tenant of American jurisprudence is the role of judges to exercise their authority to render decisions that are just, and that protect the rights of all parties before them. This is access to justice in its purest form. The foundation of justice is



Judge Edmund S. Pawelec

that parties should have standing before the court based on merit — that no party should have an unfair edge simply because they are in some manner stronger or less disadvantaged than their opponent. The Orphans' Court Division embraces these ideals by securing access to justice for persons in dire need: those who may lack the capacity to pursue justice for themselves.

### ACHIEVEMENTS

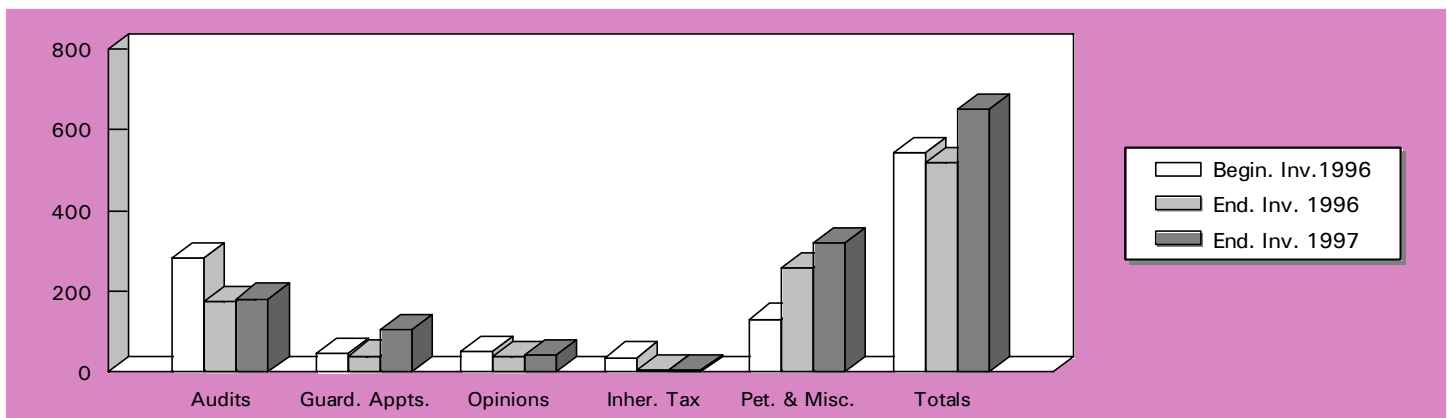
Effective August 18, 1997, the Orphans' Court Division and the Trial Division entered into a Joint Regulation whereby Orphans' Court Judges will handle all petitions for compromises or wrongful death or survival where minors or incapacitated persons are involved. This regulation has had the effect of streamlining the process thereby resolving issues of court approval quicker and providing more efficient access to justice for parties and their attorneys.



City Hall facade.

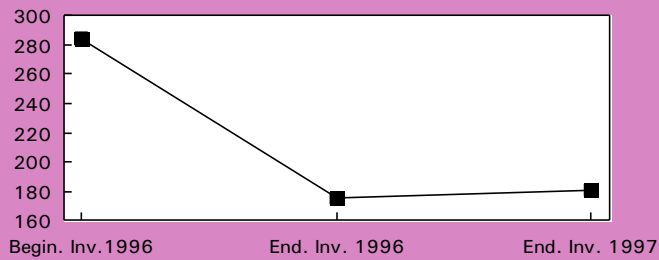


### ORPHANS' COURT STATISTICAL SUMMARY

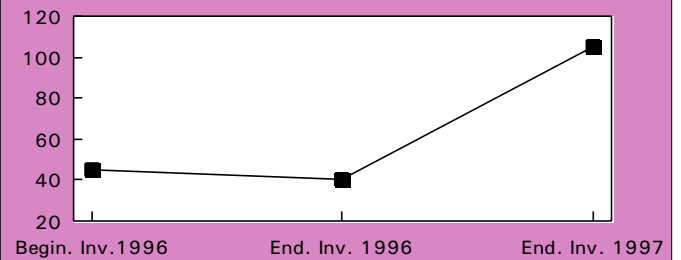


	<i>Audits</i>	<i>Guard. Appts.</i>	<i>Opinions</i>	<i>Inher. Tax</i>	<i>Pet. &amp; Misc.</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Begin. Inv. 1996	284	45	49	36	131	545
End. Inv. 1996	175	40	38	6	259	518
End. Inv. 1997	181	105	41	6	319	652

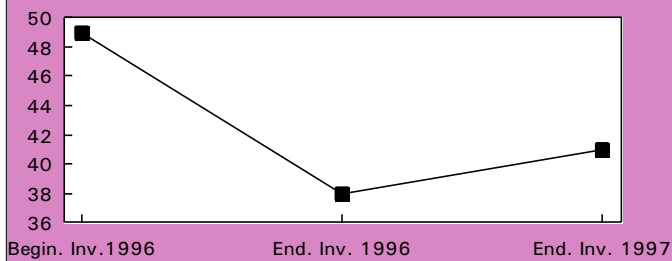
Audits



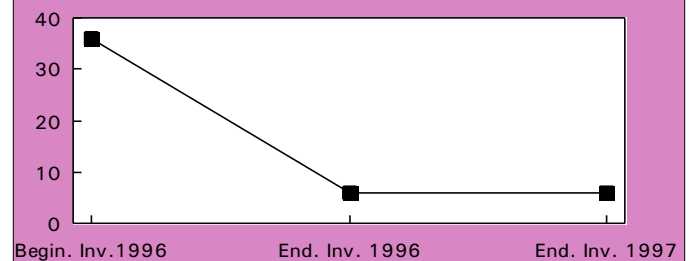
Guardian Appointments



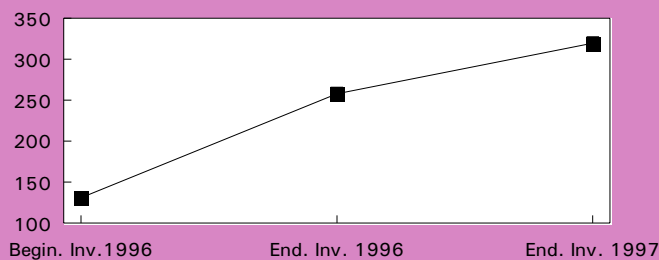
Opinions Filed



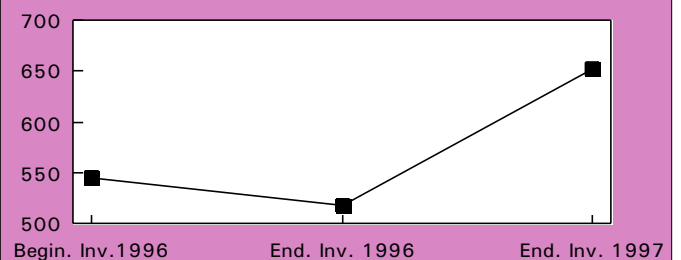
Inheritance Tax Matters

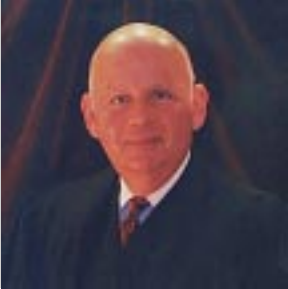


Petitions & Miscellaneous



TOTALS





Alan K. Silberstein  
*President Judge*

### Letter From the President Judge

The Philadelphia Municipal Court is truly the “People’s Court” of Philadelphia. During the 1996 and 1997 calendar years, the Court handled over 200,000 filings per year and disposed of over 200,000 cases per year. I think we can all agree that this is an impressive accomplishment.

The reason our Court functions so effectively is threefold: Judges who are willing to listen and to be fair; good top and middle level management; and excellent employees who work together almost as a family in attending to the day-to-day needs of both the public and the Court. I continue to be very proud of the Philadelphia Municipal Court and the service that it renders to the citizenry of our City.

My colleagues on the bench join with me in congratulating all of our employees for the superb job they did during these past two years. We all can and should be proud to work for the fourth largest Court in the country.



Robert S. Blasi  
*Administrative Judge*

## Letter From the Administrative Judge

Municipal Court is the indispensable avenue to justice and legal relief for the vast majority of Philadelphians who experience the formal process of the judicial system. We are the only special court in Pennsylvania which is a court of record and we serve the city through a combination of wide and convenient access to civil proceedings and substantial authority in matters of criminal law.

As a jurisdiction for civil cases, low filing fees and pro se filings provide tremendous opportunity for any citizens to be empowered. All landlord and tenant actions (unlimited jurisdictions) and civil actions in which the amount in controversy is 10,000 dollars or less fall within our responsibility. Municipal Court also handles numerous City filings including all Code Enforcement. All told, the civil disputes and complaints which comprise the overwhelming volume of encounters that average citizens have with litigation are the business of our court and our sense of duty has been heightened by a profound appreciation for this common experience with the law.

As for criminal proceedings, jurisdiction for preliminary arraignments and hearings, bail decisions and trials for offenses carrying sentences of up to five years have made us the necessary judicial forum for as many as 60,000 cases in a year and yet we have retained the confidence of the community in our capacity to dispense justice in a manner that secures the rights of everyone.

The combined civil and criminal cases we preside over each year approach totals unimagined when Municipal Court was formed in 1968. We have disciplined ourselves to face this enormous responsibility and have gathered a staff as competent and unselfishly dedicated as any serving a large jurisdiction in the country. We are thankful for their extraordinary effort, for their steadfast insistence on regarding their work as a vocation and for their determination to help us meet the challenges which lie ahead.

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Richard M. Simpson  
*Court Administrator*

### OVERVIEW

The Philadelphia Municipal Court was established through the 1968 amendment to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that also introduced the three Divisions of the Court of Common Pleas. Municipal Court is a court of limited jurisdiction with 25 judges.

Under the leadership of President Judge Alan K. Silberstein and Administrative Judge Robert S. Blasi, two Supervising Judges manage the major Municipal Court components: the Criminal and Civil Divisions. The non-judicial management team is headed by Court Administrator Richard Simpson. The Civil and Criminal Divisions are each run by a Deputy Court Administrator.

Municipal Court jurisdiction extends to criminal offenses (other than summary traffic offenses) punishable by a term of imprisonment not exceeding five years. Civil action jurisdiction is limited to claims not exceeding \$10,000.

The Philadelphia Municipal Court is the only special court of record in the Commonwealth. While there are no statutory provisions for jury trials, appeals may be taken for trials *de novo* in the Court of Common Pleas.

Municipal Court is a compact, well-organized, and high volume front line Court geared toward participation by average citizens. Interaction with the almost 200 Municipal Court employees reveals that they are committed to serving the public, and importantly, serving well.



Patricia R. McDermott  
Deputy Court Administrator  
Civil Division

### OVERVIEW & ORGANIZATION

Each year, the Philadelphia Municipal Court Civil Division receives an average of 80,000 filings — Small Claims, Landlord/Tenant, Public Nuisance Complaints, and Code Enforcement actions. Managed by the President and Administrative Judges, the Civil Division lines of authority are further delineated to include the Honorable Barbara S. Gilbert as Supervising Judge. Managers of this division report directly to the Deputy Court Administrator, Patricia R. McDermott, who in turn serves under Court Administrator Richard M. Simpson and the Supervising and Administrative and President Judges. They are also affected by the decisions of the First Judicial District Court Administrator.

Eight major branches comprise the Civil Division organizational structure: 1) First Filing Unit; 2) Civil Listings; 3) Data Processing; 4) Writ Service; 5) Dispute Resolution Program; 6) Courtroom Operations (including Civil Trial Commissioners); 7) Court Recorders; 8) Judgment and Petitions.

The Civil Division is presently staffed with approximately 60 full time employees, more than 100 Writ Servers, 5 Arbitrators, and 25 Mediators. A sampling of the full time employee classifications would include Directors, Court Administrative Officers, Trial Commissioners, Court Recorders, Court Reporters, Cashiers, Court Officers, Court Order Processing Clerks, Legal Clerks, Clerk Typists, Clerical Assistants, and Messengers.

For each year of the Biennium, an average of 80,000 cases were filed and more than 76,000 cases were disposed in Municipal Court's Civil Division.

### PURPOSE

Civil Division accessibility is highlighted by affordable and efficient operations. The mission of the Division is to guarantee that parties are afforded the opportunity to reasonably settle disputes. The aim is to safeguard fairness while offering options to expeditiously resolve cases before judges in courtrooms or through mediation or other alternative forums.

### RESPONSIBILITIES

This section broadly summarizes Municipal Court civil case processing. More detailed information concerning specific operational components is presented below under the heading "Departments". Contact with the Municipal Court First Filing Unit is the first step in the generation of Municipal Court civil cases. Here, prospective litigants are assisted by staff interviewers who help to complete pleadings and provide clients with typed versions that indicate hearing date, time and location. Fees are charged for the initiation of cases and service of complaints to defendants. Next, claims are forwarded to the Civil Listings Unit for retention until the court date. Meanwhile, claim forms and copies are disseminated to involved operational departments allowing them to concurrently proceed with their respective functions — Writ Service employees serve notice, and Data Processing personnel record pertinent data in the automated com-





Judge Linda F. Anderson

puter systems. After the hearing date litigants can proceed to the Judgment and Petitions Unit to follow-up on Writs of Execution or Petitions to Open.

### ACHIEVEMENTS

Examination of annual figures for the 1996-1997 biennium reveals a slight rise (2%) in Small Claims and Landlord/Tenant filings from about 38,000 in CY 1996, to 38,918 in CY 1997.

However, Code Enforcement data show a dramatic increase of 31%, or 21,300 filings from the 69,000 actions filed in CY 1996 to the 90,300 recorded in CY 1997. The numbers of Code Enforcement dispositions mirrored filings — 69,400 in CY 1996 and 91,000 in CY 1997.

The Dispute Resolution Program fosters access through encouraging and facilitating agreements. This approach allows more parties to proceed toward resolution in a shorter time. Agreement rates are impressive: approximately 75%

*The Dispute Resolution Program fosters access through encouraging and facilitating agreements . . . Agreement rates are impressive: approximately 75% for Small Claims Cases, 80% for Housing Cases, and 70% through Criminal Mediation.*

for Small Claims Cases, 80% for Housing Cases, and 70% through Criminal Mediation.

For calendar years 1996 and 1997, the following averages were recorded: 1) total number of cases filed — 160,000; 2) cases adjudicated — 150,093; 3) cases disposed through Dispute Resolution — 2,250; and 4) active case inventory — 22,300. The number of appeals perfected on Municipal Court Civil Trials totaled 1,273.

In attending to public participation in the judicial process, the Civil Division assisted with ADA accommodations for over 1,500 clients during the biennium.



Judge Frank T. Brady



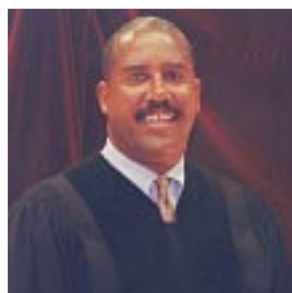
Judge Matthew F. Coppelino

### DEPARTMENTS

**First Filing Unit:** The First Filing Unit manages a variety of cases including Small Claims within the jurisdictional limit of \$10,000, Landlord/Tenant matters with unlimited jurisdiction, and City Tax Cases and Code Enforcement Complaints. Some procedures are designed to assist prospective plaintiffs without counsel. Interviewers prepare



Judge Georganne V. Daher



Judge James M. DeLeon



Judge Teresa Carr Deni



Judge Thomas F. Gehret

complaints and clerical employees type appropriate information into the court transcript. This personalized *pro se* service is thought to be unique to courts nationwide. Attorney filings are also administered by employees of this department, as are petitions to proceed “in forma pauperis” (petitions to proceed without assuming the burden of costs). In addition, First Filing cashiers receive fees generated by the high volume of cases filed in Municipal Court. Requests for ADA accommodations are also processed here.

Municipal Court employees aim to be readily accessible and helpful. The First Filing Unit employees contribute in the effort to achieve these goals by accepting mail-in filings and training Interviewers in Dispute Resolution skills to mediate Small Claims and Housing disputes.

**Civil Listings:** Civil Listings Department workers coordinate and schedule hearings in civil courtrooms of Municipal Court. This unit also controls City agency schedules and pleadings. A case management department vital to the maintenance and control of courtroom activities, Civil Listings monitors the docket to ensure that each courtroom is assigned an appropriate number of cases per day. For instance, complex protracted matters receive special

attention and time allocations for scheduling purposes. In this manner, the Department maintains a balanced calendar across available courtrooms and so makes optimal use of resources. Additionally, the Civil Listing unit processes correspondence with litigants and notifies parties of continuances and listings. Municipal Court judges, administrators and staff work cooperatively to continue to prevent backlogs. Case inventories are followed by tracking each case in the system.

**Data Processing:** Data Processing Department employees post pertinent case information, including disposition, into the mainframe computer. Additionally, they perform checks to maintain quality control. Data are made available to personnel to aid in their efforts to help litigants. Some of this information is also used by title and credit agencies. On an ongoing basis, department employees and managers implement system upgrades and hone their technology skills to increase the efficiency of service delivery.

**Writ Service:** Writ servers work to expediently serve notice to litigants. Their efforts serve to aid litigants and promote case progress leading to more timely conclusions. The unit serves more than 100,000 writs annually. Notices of civil filings and Private



Senior Judge  
Martin W. Bashoff



Judge Gwendolyn Conway



Judge Francis P. Cosgrove



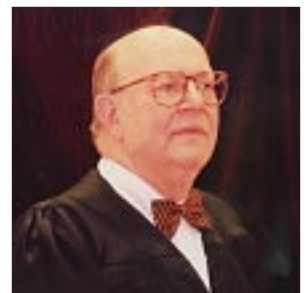
Supervising Judge  
Barbara S. Gilbert



Judge William A. King, Jr.



Judge Lydia Y. Kirkland



Judge Morton Krase

Criminal Complaints are executed by employees of this department.

**Dispute Resolution Program:** The Dispute Resolution Program is an early intervention case management system providing alternatives to more lengthy and costly Court proceedings. The program has two broad functions: 1) mediation of Housing, Small Claims and Private Criminal Complaints; and 2) arbitration of Private Criminal Complaints. The operation sees over 2,000 cases per year. Mediation sessions are moderated by volunteers, law students and staff members. Arbitration cases though, are conducted by attorneys appointed by the Court. The results have been noteworthy: the over-all agreement rate is approximately 75%. The Dispute Resolution success rate has led the United States Office of Personnel Management to adopt the program as a training model for the federal government.

**Courtroom Operations:** Municipal Court Civil cases are heard at 34 S. 11th Street. Courtroom Operations employees direct the conduct of cases and provide step by step guidance for participants in courtroom proceedings. They confirm that all parties are present and maintain the integrity and safety of the courtroom participants. Litigants and other personnel with problems are assisted by Court Officers. Tipstaves in the Civil Division are responsible for the operation of metal detectors and recording daily statistical data.

**Court Recorders:** Civil suit testimony is preserved with an audio tape system managed by Court Recorders. Recorders are present during proceedings conducted before judges. Recorders

tape testimony elicited in courtrooms. Later, the tapes may be transcribed into typed format. Copies of tapes are retained for three years.

**Trial Commissioners:** For improved case management, Civil Trial Commissioners are vested with the authority to occupy the bench and dispose cases that might not warrant judicial determinations. Trial Commissioners glean out appropriate cases for their deliberation and eventual disposition through agreement. This arrangement enables judges to focus their attention on contested matters, relieving litigants of unnecessary and time-consuming delays.

**Judgment and Petitions:** Employees of the Judgment and Petitions unit handle civil division post-trial motions. They advise and assist *pro se* litigants and parties represented by counsel to guide them through the filing processes for post-trial petitions and motions. These filings involve the enforcement of money judgments and judgments for possession in housing matters. Duties have evolved and expanded in scope to address increasing numbers of a widening variety of petitions and motions. With the Court priding itself on developing easy access for all litigants, this unit plays an integral role in making the judicial process manageable and understandable.

Once cases have been decided, the department is also responsible to see that agreements are indeed executed properly by allowing for parties to file Affidavits for Breach. Writs of Revival and Appeals to Common Pleas Court are also kept by this unit. Through these and other functions, the Judgment and

Petitions office may be viewed as the office of final resort — ensuring, to the greatest extent possible, that justice is being served.

### LINKAGES WITH OTHER COURTS AND PROGRAMS

The Municipal Court Civil Division interfaces with the Prothonotary's Office when appeals are taken to Common Pleas Court. Municipal Court employees also work with District Courts of other counties for transfers of Judgments.

### ACCESS TO JUSTICE INITIATIVES

**Project Self:** During the past two years Municipal Court has participated through the Big Sister Program of Philadelphia in "Project Self". This program places disabled high school students in Court jobs during summer

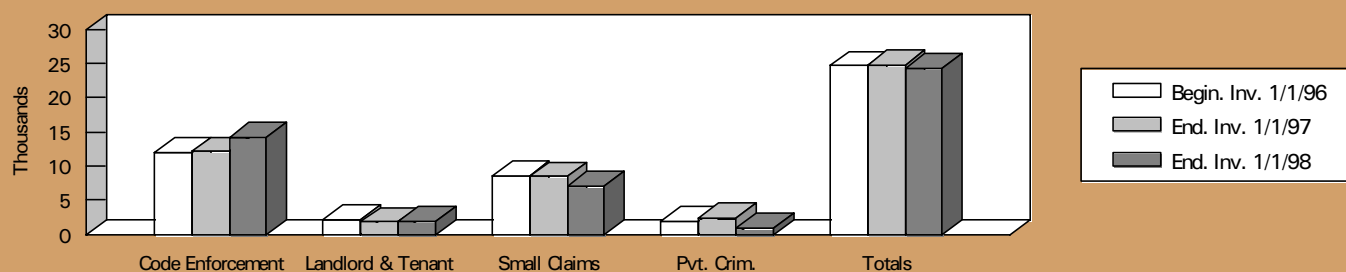
vacations. Students have the opportunity to gain valuable work experience while Court personnel learn about the needs and skills of the disabled community. The program has engendered greater understanding and generated mutually rewarding experiences for both students and Court personnel alike.

***Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):*** Municipal Court ADA accommodations procedures also include the provision of telephonic hearings from a courtroom setting, and the supply of tape recorded testimony and proceedings. In addition, staff assist litigants by facilitating filing via the U.S. Mail.

***Adjustment of Jurisdictional Limit:*** During calendar year 1996, the Municipal Court jurisdictional limit was increased to \$10,000. This move broadened access, and benefitted unrepresented and other litigants filing civil action in Small Claims Court.

## Municipal Court/Civil Division

Summary



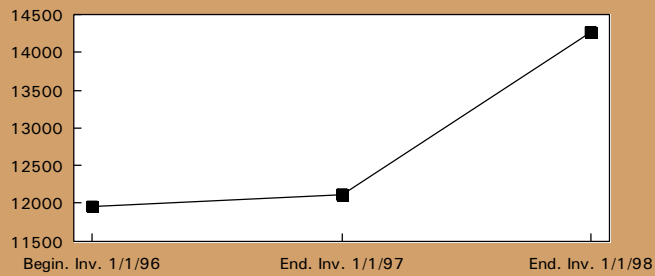
## Year to Date 1996

	<i>Avail. for Disposition 01/01/96</i>	<i>Received During Period</i>	<i>Total to be Disposed</i>	<i>Total Disposed</i>	<i>Avail. for Disposition 01/01/97</i>	<i>Increase (Decrease)</i>
Code Enforcement	11,958	69,776	81,734	69,614	12,120	162
Landlord & Tenant	2,138	24,461	26,599	24,741	1,858	(280)
Small Claims	8,510	55,639	64,149	55,738	8,411	(99)
Private Criminal	2,004	3,257	5,261	2,890	2,371	367
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>24,610</b>	<b>153,133</b>	<b>177,743</b>	<b>152,983</b>	<b>24,760</b>	<b>150</b>

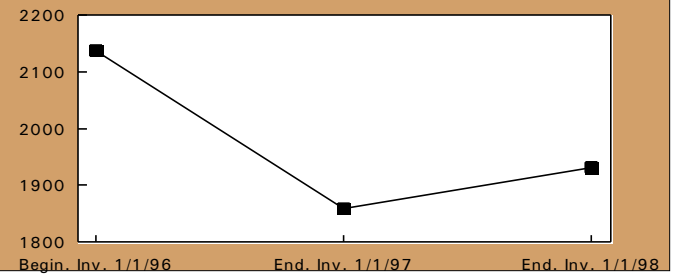
## Year to Date 1997

	<i>Avail. for Disposition 01/01/97</i>	<i>Received During Period</i>	<i>Total to be Disposed</i>	<i>Total Disposed</i>	<i>Avail. for Disposition 01/01/98</i>	<i>Increase (Decrease)</i>
Code Enforcement	12,120	92,128	104,248	89,986	14,262	2,142
Landlord & Tenant	1,858	25,321	27,179	25,249	1,930	72
Small Claims	8,411	47,103	55,514	48,361	7,153	(1,258)
Private Criminal	2,371	2,313	4,684	3,775	909	(1,426)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>24,760</b>	<b>166,865</b>	<b>191,625</b>	<b>167,371</b>	<b>24,254</b>	<b>(506)</b>

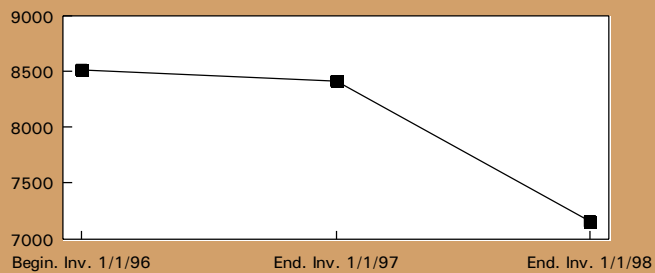
Code Enforcement



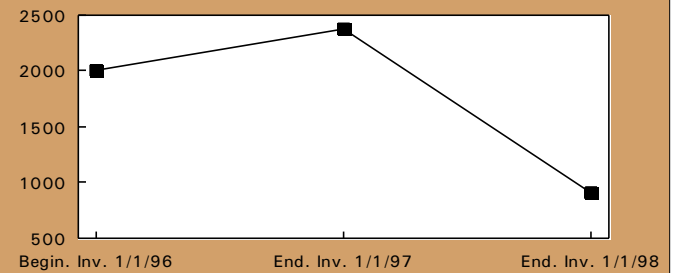
Landlord &amp; Tenant



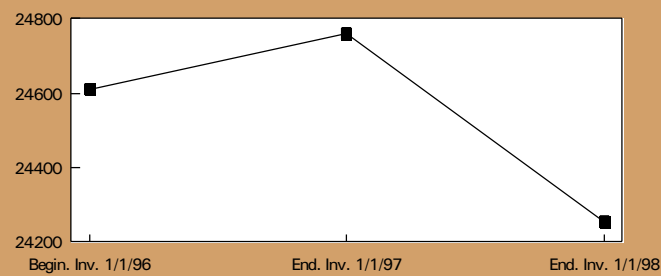
Small Claims



Private Criminal Complaints



Totals







Kathleen M. Rapone  
Deputy Court Administrator  
Criminal Division

## OVERVIEW & ORGANIZATION

Management of the Municipal Court Criminal Division, like its Civil counterpart, is overseen by Administrative Judge Robert Blasi and President Judge Alan K. Silberstein. And, similarly, the lines of management for the Criminal Section include a Supervising Judge position — here occupied by Judge Louis J. Presenza. Eight major branches comprise the Criminal Division's organizational structure: 1) Criminal Administration; 2) Arraignment Court (Bail Commissioners); 3) Criminal Listings; 4) Summary Coding; 5) Courtroom Operations; 6) Court Reporters; 7) Private Criminal Complaints and 8) Emergency Protection from Abuse Unit.

The Criminal Division of the Philadelphia Municipal Court receives, processes, and disposes of more than 70,000 criminal offenses per year (22,000 felonies; 27,000 misdemeanors; 19,000 summary offenses and 2,000 private criminal complaints). For calendar years 1996 and 1997, the following averages were recorded: 1) total number of criminal proceedings filed — 70,000; 2) criminal cases disposed — 68,000; and 3) active criminal case inventory — 14,000.

The Office of the Criminal Deputy Court Administrator is charged with overseeing the non-judicial operations of the Criminal Division. Kathleen Rapone, Deputy Court Administrator for the Criminal Division, serves under Court Administrator Richard Simpson, the Supervising Judge of the Criminal Division, the Administrative Judge, and the President Judge of the Philadelphia Municipal Court.

Seventy-five employees in the criminal division are responsible for scheduling and processing and scheduling criminal proceedings among 21 criminal courtrooms. Personnel classifications include Bail Commissioners, Trial Commissioners, Court Reporters, Directors, Supervisors, General Tipstaves, Administrative and Clerical support staff.

## PURPOSE

The Criminal Division of the Philadelphia Municipal Court provides service to the public, the Bar, criminal justice agencies and the judiciary. In matters concerning liberty, safety and property, special care is taken to ensure fair, compassionate, and professional treatment. Criminal Division objectives are identified as follows: 1) to advance access to facilities, information, service and justice; 2) to provide the public, the bar, criminal justice agencies, and the judiciary with enthusiastic and competent service geared toward prompt, and timely processing of criminal matters; 3) to equip employees with the tools, training and support needed for their personal growth related to continuing efforts to improve services; and 4) to work collaboratively with the public, the bar, criminal justice agencies and the judiciary to create a dynamic organization in the pursuit of greater excellence in service.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

Criminal proceedings are initiated by arrest without warrant, arrest warrants, complaints filed by the District Attorney's Office, private criminal complaints, and summary citations issued by law enforcement agencies. (See Rule 6000 Pa.R.Crim.P. governing Municipal Court)

Adult misdemeanor and felony arrests and certain serious juvenile matters charged by the District Attorney's Office are scheduled for preliminary arraignment for formal bail proceedings. A principal goal of bail is to ensure court appearances with due consideration for community safety. Upon arraignment, defendants are scheduled for misdemeanor trials and felony preliminary hearings before Municipal Court Judges. Case flow management is a determining factor in listing practices. Held-for-court felony matters are scheduled for arraignment at the Common Pleas Court level, while "remands" and misdemeanor trials are within the jurisdiction of Municipal Court. Felony preliminary hearings are listed for dates within 3 to 10 days from the day of the preliminary arraignment. Misdemeanor cases are generally arranged for 30 to 45 days from arraignment to provide time for discovery. Criminal Listings systems incorporate daily police working squad practices to minimize police overtime that may be required for testimony. As is true in many busy organizations, routine clerical functions are the mainstay in continuing effective operations.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

In CY 1996 and 1997, an average of 48,000 felony and misdemeanor cases, upon arrest, were charged by the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office and arraigned by Bail Commissioners in Municipal Court. Further, 19,000 non-traffic summary citations (retail theft, underage drinking, disorderly conduct, etc.) were issued by law enforcement agencies, and 2,000 private criminal complaints were approved by the District Attorney's Office and the Court. These produced approximately 68,000 dispositions

including felonies held for court, misdemeanor trials, diversion program dispositions, and criminal arbitration/mediation.

For CY 1996, 21,062 arraignments were conducted for felony matters, increasing slightly to 22,323 in 1997. In CY 1996, 22,641 misdemeanor cases were arraigned, with CY 1997 showing a 17% climb to 26,572 misdemeanor cases.

## DEPARTMENTS

***Bail Commissioners (Preliminary Arraignment Courtroom):*** In accordance with Act 187 of 1984, Bail Commissioners are quasi-judicial officers of the Municipal Court. Bail Commissioners preside in the Preliminary Arraignment Courtroom that operates 24 hours per day, 365 days a year. Commissioners are neutral authorities whose powers include administering Oaths and Affirmations, presiding at preliminary arraignments, setting bail consistent with pretrial release guidelines, conducting hospital arraignments, issuing criminal complaints, appointing counsel, scheduling court events, and issuing arrest and search and seizure warrants. Criminal Legal Clerks staffing courtrooms are responsible for the origination of criminal transcripts. Clerks' myriad duties include initial case flow management for all first listing felony and misdemeanor charges. In 1996, a video arraignment system was implemented to conduct proceedings from a central location which, through state of the art technology, is linked to five remote geographic locations throughout the City of Philadelphia. In 1997, the Preliminary Arraignment Reporting System (PARS) was introduced to electronically transmit data from arrest through arraignment. (See Rule 4000 Pa.R.Crim.P. governing specific Bail Rules)



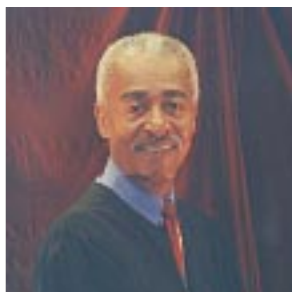
Judge Eric L. Lillian

**Criminal Listings:** The primary objective of the Criminal Listings Department is to maintain misdemeanor trial and felony preliminary hearing courtroom calendars for 18 criminal courtrooms. The department administers a master calendaring system and schedules approximately 50,000 cases each year. In addition to scheduling cases, the Criminal Listings department responds to requests for interpreter services, processes listing notices, prepares writs and statistical reports, and interacts with the public, the bar, the judiciary and other criminal justice agencies.

**Criminal Coding:** Employees of the Criminal Coding department process, translate into electronic code, and schedule non-traffic summary citations issued by various law enforcement agencies in Philadelphia. Many summary offenses, like disorderly conduct, prostitution, graffiti, and underage drinking, are quality-of-life issues. The unit processes approximately 20,000 citations per year. Additionally, special programs that are monitored through the unit include Night Court, alternative summary diversion programs, and graffiti court. On an ongoing basis, the unit assists community members, the judiciary, and criminal justice agencies with case flow information.

**Courtroom Operations:** Tipstaves assigned to the criminal courtrooms are key to effectively maintain control in courtrooms that are located in the Criminal Justice Center and police districts in Philadelphia. Tipstaves are responsible for coordinating high-volume trial and preliminary hearing lists for presiding judges. Additionally, Tipstaves provide courtroom security, swear in witnesses, mark evidence, guard entrances and exits, screen packages, enforce rules, and maintain courtroom decorum. Tipstaves also report statistical data for case flow management. In preliminary hearing rooms, Tipstaves act as clerks when they prepare necessary documentation for court proceedings. Two staff interpreters report to the Chief of Courtroom Operations supporting efforts toward the provision of equal access to justice. Moreover, staff services are augmented by per diem interpreters and a language line system for criminal interpreting operational needs.

**Court Reporters:** Court Reporters record verbatim testimony for criminal preliminary hearings and trials in Municipal Court. Court Reporters are assigned to preliminary hearing courtrooms where conditions for note produc-

Judge William  
Austin Meehan, Jr.

Judge Ronald B. Merriweather



Judge John O'Grady

Supervising Judge  
Louis G. Presenza

Judge Louis G. F. Retacco

tion activities are specifically defined. Reporter transcription activities are governed by court rules (Pa.R.Crim.P.9030 and 6012). Reporters produce notes of testimony for 25,000 preliminary hearings yearly. Notes for trials are produced on an "as needed" basis.

**Private Criminal Complaints:** The Private Criminal Complaint unit processes citizen complaints when crimes are alleged without police arrest. Complaints are approved by the District Attorney's Office and Municipal Court Judges. The majority of private criminal complaints involve disputes between family members or neighbors. Frequently, misdemeanor charges include simple assault, terroristic threats, harassment, and theft by deception. Increasingly, insurance fraud claims are settled at the arraignment stage before Trial Commissioners. Other charges are diverted to arbitration or compulsory mediation to try to resolve issues or, when accord is not reached, these cases are scheduled before judges for disposition.

**Emergency Protection from Abuse:** The Emergency Protection from Abuse unit operates during non-traditional business hours for emergency petitions only. The unit is staffed by law-trained masters who conduct *ex parte* hearings and review petitions to determine if

orders should be granted in accordance with the Protection from Abuse Act. Often, when emergency petitions are denied, cases are referred to the Abuse Assistance Unit of the Domestic Relations Branch of the Family Division of the Court of Common Pleas. Nonetheless, this unit issues approximately 4,000 emergency petitions annually for eventual review by Family Division Judges.

### ACCESS TO JUSTICE INITIATIVES

Municipal Court works collaboratively with other courts in the First Judicial District to provide justice to citizens seeking interaction with the Court. The Court continues to furnish the public with broadened access to justice in a timely, courteous and effective manner. With an eye toward future gains in these areas, several programs have been instituted.

**Night Court:** In 1996, the Court introduced Philadelphia communities to the Night Court concept, where judges and staff voluntarily bring Court proceedings into neighborhoods to provide immediate hearings involving quality-of-life crimes.

**Arbitration:** Municipal Court provides arbitration for private criminal complaints to address underlying issues in order to prevent their escalation into criminal



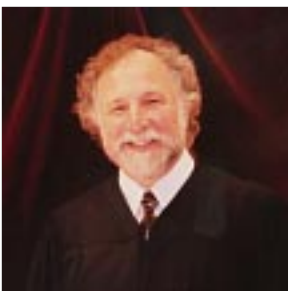
Judge Seamus P. McCaffrey



Judge Edward G. Mekel



Judge Marsha H. Neifield



Judge Harvey W. Robbins



Judge Felice Rowley Stack



Judge Craig M. Washington

complaints. As a result, parties are afforded mutually acceptable, usually beneficial outcomes.

**Treatment Court:** More recently, the Criminal Division, under the leadership of the supervising judge, implemented a Treatment Court initiative to deal with one of the underlying causes of criminal involvement: drug addiction. The establishment of Treatment Court, a first for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, represents a new effort to bring the criminal justice and substance abuse treatment systems to bear more effectively on the substance-abusing criminal justice population. The approach relies on Criminal Court involvement and supervision in accordance with sound treatment practices, regard for public safety, and due process of law.

### LINKAGES WITH OTHER COURTS AND PROGRAMS

Municipal Court maintains a close relationship with the Court of Common Pleas in case processing and scheduling. External criminal justice agencies, police, district attorney, public defender, prisons, etc. play major roles from arrest through arraignment proceedings. Their cooperative interactivity with the Court contributes to continuing efficiency from the inception of a case through final disposition on all levels. In developing and implementing new programs and initiatives, criminal division personnel have also cultivated relationships with other City agencies including the Mayor's Office, the Managing Director's Office, the Health Department, and treatment providers.

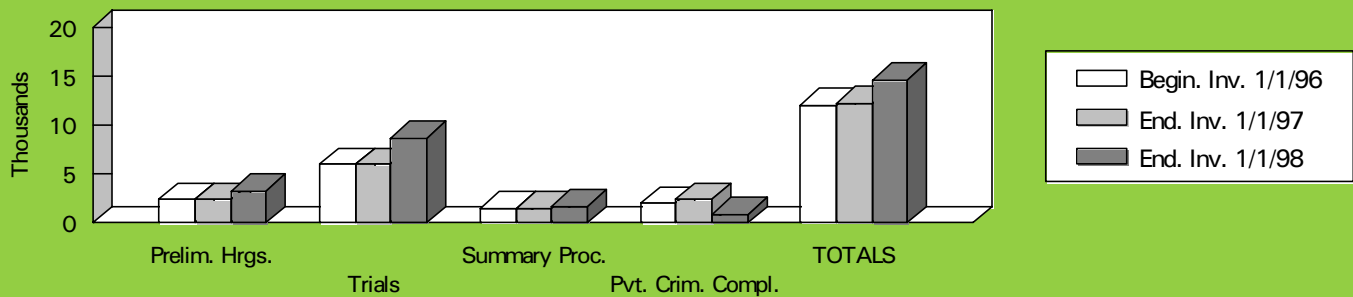


Criminal Justice Center, 11th Floor hallway



## Municipal Court/Criminal Division

Summary



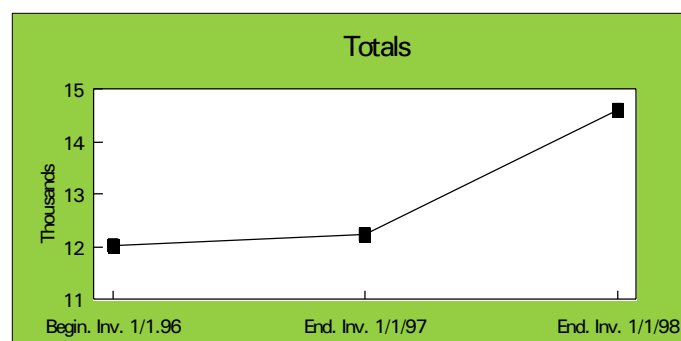
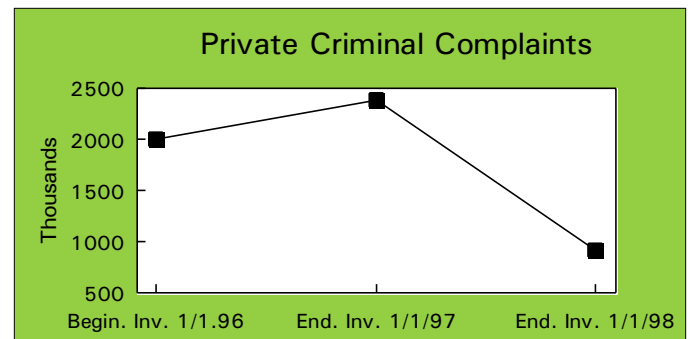
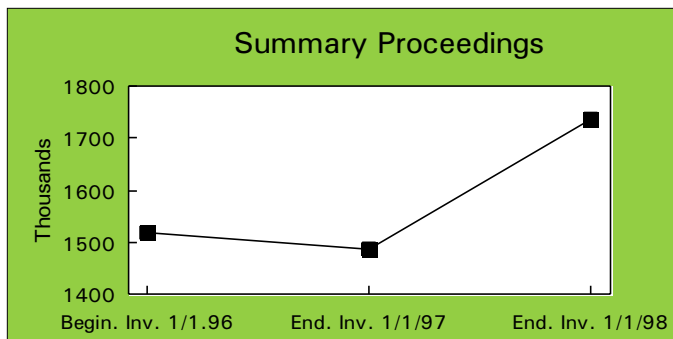
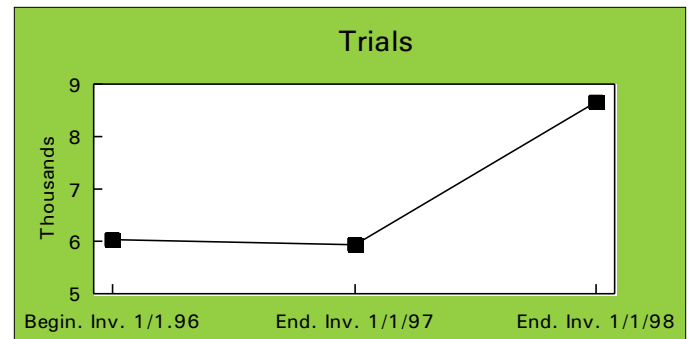
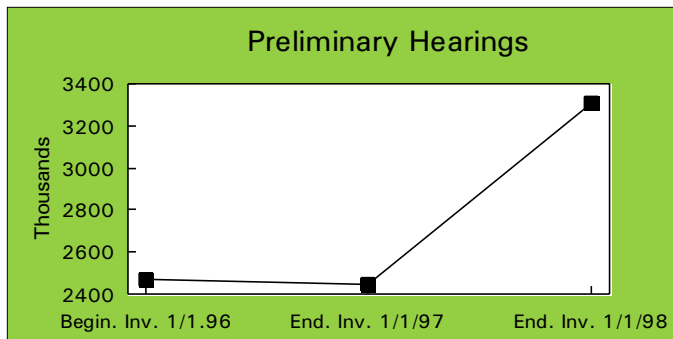
## Year to Date 1996

	<i>Avail. for Disposition 01/01/96</i>	<i>Received During Period</i>	<i>Total to be Disposed</i>	<i>Total Disposed</i>	<i>Avail. for Disposition 01/01/97</i>	<i>Increase (Decrease)</i>
Preliminary Hearings	2,466	21,062	23,528	21,081	2,447	(19)
Trials	6,028	22,641	28,669	22,733	5,936	(92)
Summary Proceedings	1,519	19,307	20,826	19,339	1,487	(32)
Private Crim. Compl.	2,004	3,257	5,261	2,890	2,371	367
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,017</b>	<b>66,267</b>	<b>78,284</b>	<b>66,043</b>	<b>12,241</b>	<b>224</b>

## Year to Date 1997

	<i>Avail. for Disposition 01/01/96</i>	<i>Received During Period</i>	<i>Total to be Disposed</i>	<i>Total Disposed</i>	<i>Avail. for Disposition 01/01/97</i>	<i>Increase (Decrease)</i>
Preliminary Hearings	2,447	22,323	24,770	21,461	3,309	862
Trials	5,936	26,572	32,508	23,847	8,661	2,725
Summary Proceedings	1,487	19,052	20,529	18,802	1,737	250
Private Crim. Compl.	2,371	2,313	4,684	3,775	909	(1,426)
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,241</b>	<b>70,260</b>	<b>82,501</b>	<b>67,885</b>	<b>14,616</b>	<b>2,375</b>





	<i>Preliminary Hearings</i>	<i>Trials</i>	<i>Summary Proceedings</i>	<i>Private Crim. Complaints</i>	<i>TOTALS</i>
Begin. Inv. 1/1.96	2,466	6,028	1,519	2,004	12,017
End. Inv. 1/1/97	2,447	5,936	1,487	2,371	12,241
End. Inv. 1/1/98	3,309	8,661	1,737	909	14,616



Frank Little  
*President Judge*

### Letter from the President Judge

My official life has always been tempered by my personal belief in the system and the rights of individuals to participate in that system in a meaningful way. For those reasons, I am proud of the judges and employees of the Philadelphia Traffic Court because they are the standard bearers — the foundation — for most of Philadelphia's citizens' access to justice.

In their endeavors to deliver expedient but fair outcomes to cases arising from moving violations, the Traffic Court Judiciary, Administration, and staff provide an array of services to allow the public greater access everyday. In support of access, Traffic Court personnel listen to the customers' cases, provide information and guidance, collect and disburse money from fines, and supply enforcement to further ensure public safety. Society at large benefits from safer streets, and in that way, even those people not having business before the Court are granted a measure of access to justice.

Together, we hope to continue our good work and make even more improvements. Our goal is, relying on the foundations of the past and present, to go on to widen access into the future.



Bernice DeAngelis  
*Administrative Judge*

Copy provided in  
Mac format

## Letter from the Administrative Judge

Philadelphia Traffic Court judges and employees are proud to be representatives of the First Judicial District's leader in the number of customers served. As the average citizen's first, and perhaps only encounter with the judicial system, Traffic Court provides more access to more people than any other Court of the First Judicial District.

During the 1996-1997 Biennium, numerous improvements were conceived, developed, and initiated to help more of citizens of Philadelphia participate more effectively in the judicial process. Physical plant upgrades and staffing improvements to customer services resulted in better surroundings and faster service for motorists appearing at the Court. The result: more citizens served more efficiently. Extended hours, including Saturday sessions, and implementation of Night Court afforded clients with jobs and other responsibilities greater opportunities to conduct their business with the Court.

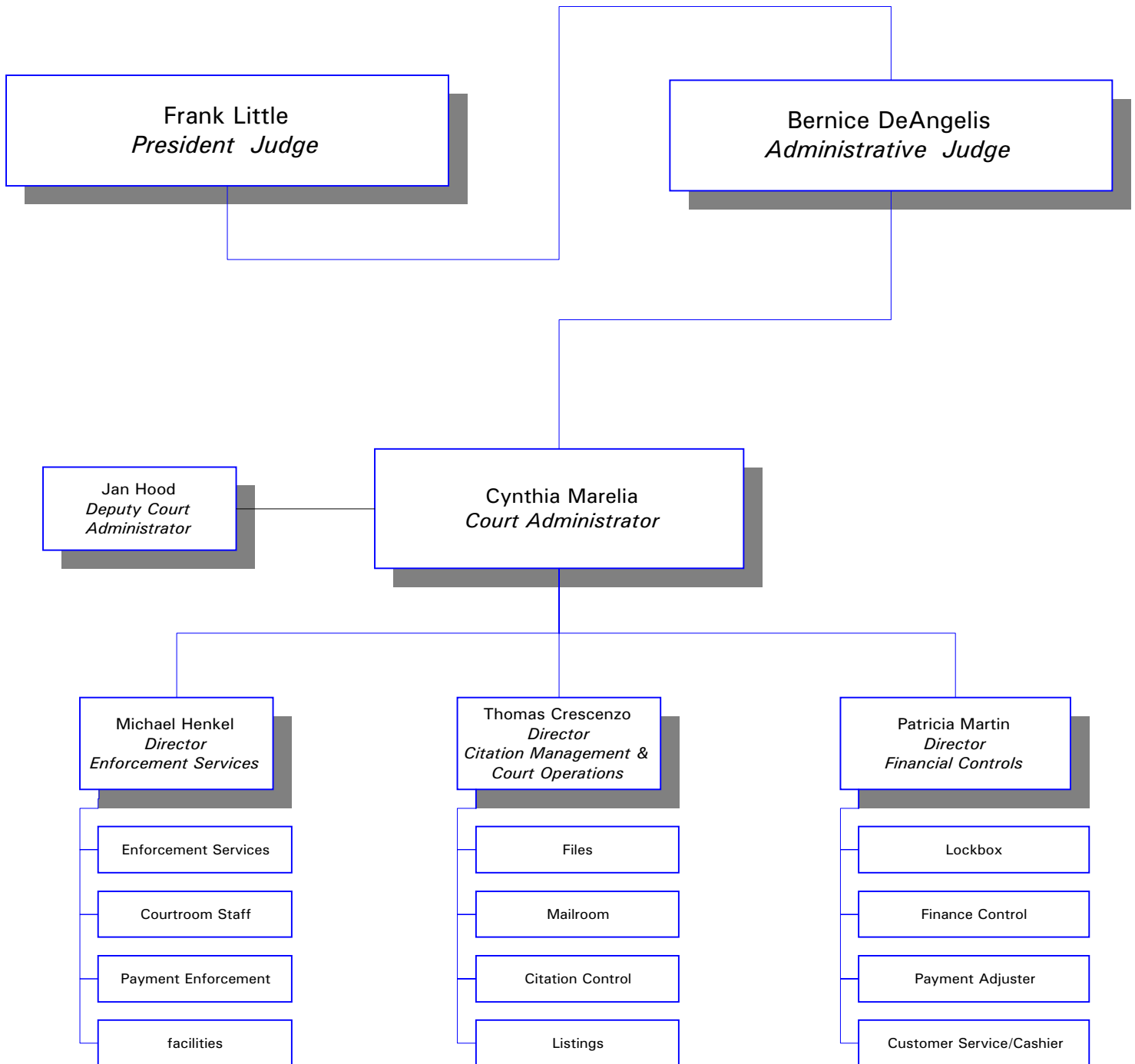
Technological improvements to the information services systems, which are continuing apace with the wave of current and future automated innovations, also serve to permit more people access through speedier case processing. Relatedly, streamlined case processing techniques, policies, and procedures compliment advances in other areas.

Here, citizens can, and most often do, plead their case directly to judges. All the while, members of the Traffic Court Bench, Administration, and staff continue in their endeavor to provide individualized, personal services. Our judges and employees have established a firm footing while looking to ongoing and future improvements. In the quest to further ensure public safety, while dispensing justice with ever increasing numbers of customers, the First Judicial District Traffic Court truly exemplifies the provision of "Access to Justice: A Foundation for the Future."

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Cynthia Marelia  
Court Administrator

## **Traffic Court Mission Statement**

*"We strive to accomplish two important goals:*

- 1) to utilize all reasonable, necessary and available measures to insure compliance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; and*  
*2) to preserve the safety of our citizenry."*

## **OVERVIEW AND ORGANIZATION**

Judges and employees of the Traffic Court of the First Judicial District operate from its location at 800 Spring Garden Street, Philadelphia. Governed by statute, administrative orders, and the Pennsylvania Rules of Criminal Procedure pertaining to Procedures in Summary Cases, the employees in the Branch receive and process matters pertaining to moving motor vehicle violations.

During the biennium, the Traffic Court benefitted from the leadership of Bernice DeAngelis, Administrative Judge. President Judge Frank Little was appointed early in 1998, after the 1996-1997 Biennial Report period. Both are members of the First Judicial District Administrative Governing Board. Reporting to them are Court Administrator Cynthia Marelia and Jeanette Hood, Deputy Court Administrator. The non-judicial management team also includes three Directors who oversee various supervisors and their unit staffs in the Traffic Court Administrative structure. The three directorships are: 1) Enforcement Services; 2) Citation Management and Courtroom Operations; and 3) Financial Control.

Traffic Court has eight judges with over 100 non-judicial employees working in administration, administrative staff, management, court officer, clerical, and building services positions.

Traffic Court receives and records virtually all filings concerning moving violations charged within in the County of Philadelphia. In CY 1996, 246,620 citations were received and processed. In CY 1997, that number increased by more than 118,000, or 48%, to total \$364,823 filings.

## **PURPOSE**

Traffic Court is a summary court charged by the Pennsylvania Legislature with the processing of all moving violations issued pursuant to Title 75 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, and all City ordinances pertaining to Title 75, following procedures as set forth in Chapter 50 of the Pennsylvania Rules of Criminal Procedure, and guided in part by local ordinances. The Traffic Court is: 1) the filing repository for all moving violations actions in the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania; 2) the adjudicative and dispositive agent of those proceedings; 3) with support, the enforcement arm for dispositions, statute and rules; and 4) a receiver and disperser of revenues. Traffic Court personnel fulfill the roles of the Prothonotary.



Senior Judge Edward Cox

notary, the Clerk of Quarter Sessions, and the Sheriff's Department as well as the standard Court functions normally associated with other Courts and Divisions of the FJD.

### RESPONSIBILITIES

As the average citizen's first, and often only interaction with the justice system, and, considering the enormously high volume of customers as suggested by issuance statistics above, the Traffic Court's judges and employees are committed to, and ever mindful of, public service and "access to justice".

Traffic Court personnel receive citations from the Philadelphia Police and maintain accurate records reflecting citations, customer histories, and collection and disbursement of funds. Employees respond to requests for information and pleadings, schedule hearings, facilitate the disposition of cases, and collect and properly disperse public funds geared toward the efficient administration of justice in the interest of public safety.

Along with the relationship between the Court and the Police and other law enforcement agencies, Traffic Court maintains operational linkages with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, the Philadelphia Parking Authority, the Prothonotary's Department in the Office of the President Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, and the Common Pleas Court to which appeals from Traffic Court judgments are referred.

Enhanced access to Traffic Court facilities is provided by accommodating the public with extended weekday court hours (8:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.)

and on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 PM.. With the advent of the recent "Boot and Tow" legislation requiring motorists to appear at the Court within 24 hours, providing access becomes all the more important.

Customer service representatives serve the public through: 1) the provision of information regarding citations and records; 2) receipt of payments for violations (MAC and credit cards permitted); 3) scheduling hearings; and 4) providing assistance with other governmental entities concerning license suspension when requested.

Aside from myriad administrative duties, the Administrative Judge's Office provides service to those individuals who have fulfilled their obligations with regard to their suspended driving privileges by corresponding with PennDOT and facilitating the restoration of driving privileges.

Access is afforded through scheduled hearings before capable judges who allow the public to state their defense and then render fair and equitable decisions.

Traffic Court programs particularly associated with access to justice include the following:

- Working Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) strategies are in compliance with the Act, including the availability of a TDD phone system for the hearing impaired.
- Individuals who are visiting from out-of-state have the opportunity of an immediate hearing in Motion Court.
- An excellent scofflaw enforcement system that promotes traffic safety and generates revenue as well.
- A program in conjunction with the Prothonotary's Office whereby liens are lodged against violators who default on payment plans, also a source of revenue.



Judge Francis E. Kelly



Judge Lillian Podgorski



## ACHIEVEMENTS

**Record Years for Collections:** Lead by Administrative Judge Bernice DeAngelis, beginning in FY 1996, the Court's record for collection and disbursement of funds underwent a comprehensive evaluative and improvement process. Driven in part by issuance, but arising also from efficiencies implemented during the last two years, money disbursed to the City and State through Traffic Court collections rose 31% — from \$7.1 million in CY 1996 to a record \$9.3 million in CY 1997 — an increase of \$2.2 million.

**New Safety Initiative:** Additionally, new steps designed to contribute to the improvement of safety of Philadelphia's streets have been implemented by the Court. Responding to public interest and legislative mandates — and led by the Court — the Mayor's Office, the City Police, the Philadelphia Parking Authority (PPA), and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) have been working toward instituting a pilot program that will remove unregistered cars and those of unlicensed drivers from Philadelphia highways. A new law allows for the immobilization, impoundment, and eventual sale of cars — hence the common name "Boot and Tow Law." — a future source of revenue.

Aside from a plan for heavy trucks, the law sets forth procedures for the confiscation of vehicles owned by individuals having more than \$250 in unpaid traffic fines and unregistered autos and cars driven by persons without valid operator's privileges whether the driver owns the vehicle or not. The process requires involved operators and/

or owners to appear at Traffic Court within 24 hours. There, drivers and owners must pay their fines or agree to a payment plan to be able to get their car back. In either instance, individuals failing to cooperate and satisfy their debt to the Court, or to make arrangements for doing so through an installment plan, will have their cars sold at auction.

With these new enforcement tools, increased public safety and enhanced Traffic Court efficiency are expected.

**Facility Upgrades and Court Modernizations:** During the past two years the Traffic Court lobby area has been completely redesigned to accommodate "one stop" customer service. Cashiers and inquiry clerks became customer service representatives capable of responding to public needs. For security purposes, metal detectors and bullet-proof barriers have been installed. There are also plans on the drawing board for enhanced detention facilities.

**Technology Upgrades:** More PennDOT and Lockheed TIMS system mainframe terminals have been installed to better serve the increasing informational needs of the public, including the addition of terminals in each courtroom, allowing on-line, real-time access to case information benefitting citizens who appear for a hearing. Direct data and communication links with the Philadelphia Police have been developed to support the effective enforcement of new legislation. The automation system is also undergoing and will continue to undergo evaluation to identify problem areas and make appropriate improvements to enhance service delivery, increase efficiency, and ensure timeliness in support of Court operations.



Judge Joseph A. Howlett



Judge Fortunato Perri



Judge Thomasina Tynes

The Traffic Court systems integration contractor, Lockheed Martin IMS, has developed comprehensive software to support the Court's recent enforcement initiative for impounding the vehicles of delinquent motorists under Title 75, Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes §6309 et seq. (Boot and Tow Law). This has included real-time integration with the database of the Philadelphia Parking Authority for the on-street capture of vehicles owned by delinquent offenders.

Additional personal computer devices on the FJD local area network for e-mail and office automation access have been installed, with staff training for Windows 95 expected in the coming months.

### DEPARTMENTS

#### ***Citation Management and Court***

***Operations:*** This department receives citations, schedules hearings, assembles documentation, records results on the automated system, and maintains files. Additionally, personnel provide requested information from citation source documents and court proceedings records when requested by the judicial staff, court employees and parties involved in the appeal process. Appeal cases are prepared here and forwarded to Common Pleas Court.

Employees in sub-units interface with the Police Liaison Unit to ensure citation accuracy, perform quality-control checks on the finished product produced by the data-entry vendor, and secures the permanency of the citation through micro-filming with a document number for filing and retrieval purposes. Employees also record each decision rendered, schedule special hearings, and update payment plans.

This department is responsible for maintaining the court calendar in the computer system, i.e. the correct number of cases in a courtroom, number of open courtrooms per month and courtroom accommodations for special hearings. Case research and report reviews are included in the clerical duties of this department.

Court Officers are responsible for expediting the recording of dispositions of all cases efficiently while maintaining discipline and decorum in the courtroom. Tipstaves manage case flow by assuring courtroom preparation and coordinating agencies, attorneys, clerks and police liaison officers effectively. This provides an environment beneficial to the judiciary and defendants.

Mail Room employees pick up mail at the post office each morning and make two daily in-house mail pick-ups throughout the building. Mail room personnel are responsible for folding, presorting and running at least 1,000 notices through the Inserta-Max for daily mailing. All packages, certified, computer tapes and special notices are mailed from here. The postage meter and all other equipment are maintained by personnel. Bar coding has been introduced with an estimated \$30,000 per year in savings expected.

Maintenance workers perform all necessary janitorial and other duties to maintain the building. They construct, repair or renovate any area of the court when necessary to allow for a more conducive work environment. This department handles receipt of shipped packages and distributes them.

***Enforcement Services:*** Enforcement Department workers contact scofflaws and others with defaulted payment plans by phone, and execute and dispose of outstanding warrants for the Court

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through personal contact with violators either at home or wherever they may be located. Arrested violators are supervised in cell rooms while their records are compiled in preparation for their arraignment in Traffic Court courtrooms.

Violators arrested by enforcement officers or others are secured in a detention unit to ensure their safety and speedy legal processing. This department works in conjunction with other law enforcement agencies to maintain security and to ensure violators' rights.

Warrant files are maintained and updated daily by this department.

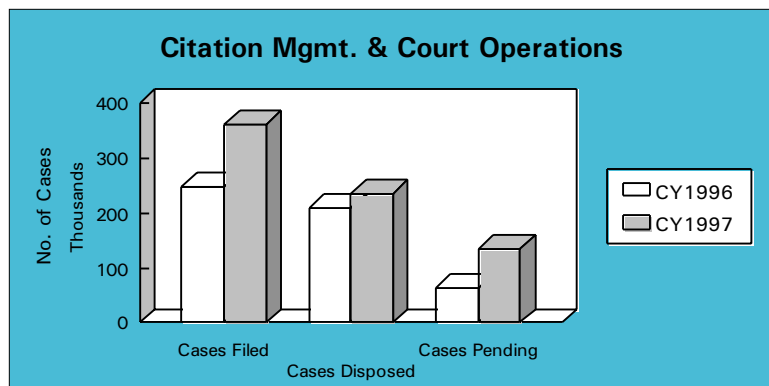
**Financial Control:** This department receives all monies from violators who come to the court for citation payments, to schedule a hearing, to pay fines imposed at a court hearing and to establish payment plans. Customer Service Cashiers dispense information regarding citations, suspensions, default payments, and the Boot and Tow program. They also provide guidance to courtrooms. Cashiers are responsible for the balancing of all monies collected at the Court on a daily basis.

This department is responsible for all monies received by the Traffic Court, including verification of Cashiering and Lock Box transactions, all bank deposits and bank account reconciliation. Collateral and citation payments are monitored, refunds approved and daily revenue distribution reports are prepared. A monthly financial analysis is prepared to analyze the dramatic revenue growth reported above.

Lockbox employees of the Financial Control Department receive and sort all incoming mail for distribution throughout the court. All citation and collateral payments are received and recorded. Returned mail is recorded as well. This department is responsible for purging the system of all incorrect mailing addresses, saving postage for items previously mailed to non-existent addresses. All payment documents are authenticated for future access through microfilming.

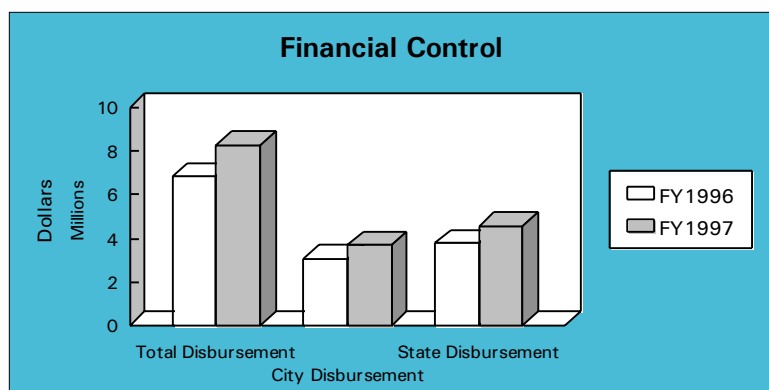
## Citation Management and Court Operations

	<i>CY1996</i>	<i>CY1997</i>
<i>Cases Filed</i>	246,539	360,774
<i>Cases Disposed</i>	209,265	235,704
<i>Cases Pending</i>	62,429	133,386



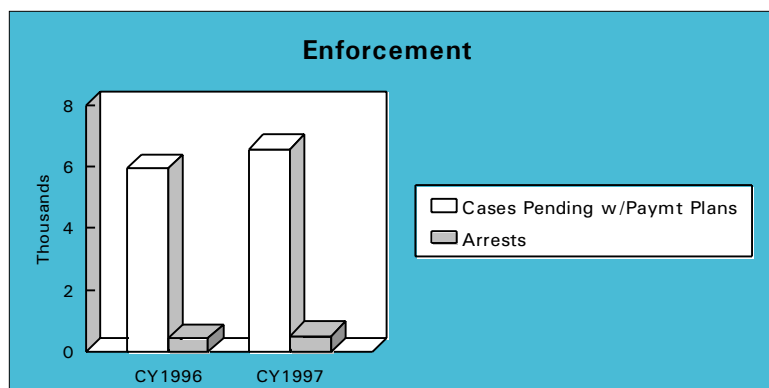
## Financial Control

	<i>FY1996</i>	<i>FY1997</i>
<i>Total Disbursement</i>	\$6,819,768.54	\$8,272,029.00
<i>City Disbursement</i>	3,048,343.43	3,692,569.53
<i>State Disbursement</i>	3,771,425.11	4,579,459.47



## Enforcement

	<i>CY1996</i>	<i>CY1997</i>
<i>Cases Pending</i>		
<i>w/Payment Plans</i>	5,945	6,587
<i>Arrests</i>	62,429	133,386



*The First Judicial District has been graced over its long and productive history with a Bench composed of members whose abilities, enthusiasm, intellect, and compassion have largely defined the District's successes. Unfortunately, several judicial leaders departed this life during the 1996-1997 Biennium. The brief summaries included below are intended merely to invoke the memory of these fine individuals. Their contributions are too numerous to list, and of incalculable value. In a very real sense, a large share of the Court's achievements, past, present, and future, are a part of the legacy of the people listed herein.*

***Judge Ethan Allen Doty***

Senior Judge Ethan Allen Doty retired from the Common Pleas Court bench in the fall of 1996. At the time of his retirement, Judge Doty presided over mass tort litigation at the Complex Litigation Center. He was appointed to the bench in 1958, nominated without opposition in 1959, and reelected in 1969. Judge Doty was elected Administrative Judge of the Trial Division in 1968 and reelected in 1974. Judge Doty graduated from Temple University and Temple University Law School.

***Judge Charles Klein***

Senior Judge Charles Klein served for 56 years as a judge in Orphans' Court. Judge Klein, who served as a judge for longer than anyone in Philadelphia's history, served as President Judge of the Orphans' Court and as Administrative Judge of the Orphans' Court Division of the Court of Common Pleas for over twenty years. Judge Klein graduated from Temple University School of Law.

***Judge Berel Caesar***

Senior Judge Berel Caesar presided over mass tort litigation at the Complex Litigation Center until the time of his death on October 9, 1997. Judge Caesar graduated from West Philadelphia High School in 1945, Swarthmore College in 1948 and the University of Pennsylvania Law School in 1954. Judge Caesar was appointed to the bench in 1974, elected in 1977 and reelected in 1987.

***Judge Edward Rosenwald***

Senior Judge Edward Rosenwald presided over mass tort litigation at the Complex Litigation Center until the time of his retirement from the bench in 1995. Judge Rosenwald graduated from Southern High School, the Wharton School, and the University of Pennsylvania Law School. He prided himself on being able to effectuate settlement of personal injury claims that came to his court for disposition.

***Judge Frank M. Jackson***

Senior Judge Frank Jackson presided over mass tort litigation at the Complex Litigation Center until the time of his death on March 12, 1997. Judge Jackson was appointed to the Court of Common Pleas in October 1984 and elected November 1985. Judge Jackson graduated from St. Joseph's University and the University of Pennsylvania Law School. Prior to his attaining senior status, Judge Jackson presided in the Family Division of the Court of Common Pleas.

***Judge Edward J. Blake***

Judge Edward Blake was the first Court Administrator of the Court of Common Pleas serving under former President Judge Vincent Carroll. He was appointed to the bench in December 1971, elected in 1973, and retained in 1983. In 1986 Judge Blake was appointed by the Supreme Court to serve as Administrative Judge of the Trial Division. Judge Blake served as Administrative Judge until his election as President Judge of the Court of Common Pleas by the Board of Judges on December 18, 1990. Judge Blake graduated from St. Joseph's College and the University of Pennsylvania Law School.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Joseph J. DiPrimio, Esquire  
*Chairman  
Biennial Report Committee  
Editor in Chief*

### Genesis

**gen´e ·sis** (jèn´ î-sís), *noun*, [Latin, from Greek *genesis*, from the root of *gignesthai* to be born; akin to Latin *gignere*, toward: to cause to be born] The origination or coming into being of anything; natural development into being; process or mode of originating, especially by growth or evolution; as, the *genesis* of the mind or of ideas; also, a theory or account of the genesis of anything.



James M. Clark  
*Co-Editor*

Consistent with the advantages and the spirit of the reorganization of the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania, and, pursuant to the direction of the Administrative Governing Board (AGB)<sup>1</sup>, First Judicial District Court Administrator Joseph J. DiPrimio, Esq., recognized the benefits inherent in the publication of a report that would, for the first time in the more than 300 year-old history of the Court, describe in one place the foundation, organization and accomplishments of all the Court's judges and staff from throughout the District. Never before had such a single comprehensive report been presented, combining organizational information and performance-related descriptions concerning every Court of the First Judicial District - the oldest in the nation.

Essentially, the outlined plan included: 1) gathering creative and knowledgeable individuals from each of the constituent Courts and Divisions; 2) creating a cohesive theme; 3) assigning responsibilities and forming a subcommittee and Editorial Board structure; and 4) pledging and providing his support, reinforcing confidence in the membership's commitment, skill and ability to bring the project to fruition. The reasoning here was that the component Courts could be best explained by those people working in them, and importantly, that collegiality would be fostered through collaborative work on the project, culminating with publication of the report. Later, participants' submissions were compiled and edited for consistency of style, the editors being mindful of the importance of the preservation of the informational content. A list of participants is provided below.

Following this vision, and beginning in late 1997, the First Judicial District Court Administrator, with the support of the Administrative Governing Board, began to organize representatives from all the constituent components comprising the Philadelphia Court System. After considerable discussion during intense brainstorming sessions among the participants, agreement was achieved establishing a report theme relating modern-day access to justice initiatives and commitments as presented within the context of the rich history of the District. Potential readership was discussed, and the format and number of reports required were determined as a result. Subcommittees were formed to address questions concerning statistics,



Leonard A. Hacking  
*Co-Editor*

<sup>1</sup> The centralized management infrastructure of the District was largely defined by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania in March of 1996 through an order made effective April 1, 1996 that established the Administrative Governing Board (AGB) — a group of judicial leaders with extensive responsibilities for overall management of the District. The board is aided by the FJD Court Administrator.



photography, format, and timetables. Because of the historical nature of this endeavor - such a report had never been organized before — an expert in graphics presentation, Image IV Advertising Design/Marketing Communications, was retained.

Paramount to the development of the report, a thematic thread winds through every section: Access to Justice. Relatedly, the group concentrated on the concept of accountability. Internally, accountability is often manifested by the Court's responsibilities to adhere to and continue to set higher standards for performance. In the expanded sense, Judges, administrators and staff also hold themselves accountable to the public whom they serve, and serve well.

This report is the product of the hard work of the contributors with the support of the judiciary and other Court leaders. It is especially noteworthy that during operations, following clear direction from the Administrative Governing Board, the Court Administrator and others, the the day-to-day accomplishments of the judges and employees of the First Judicial District represent the essence of the report. While the cooperative publication of the First Judicial District Special 1996-1997 Biennial Report is a laudable achievement in and of itself, it merely reflects what the thousands of employees do every day: provide the highest caliber of justice to the citizens of Philadelphia.

### ***Biennial Report Committee:***

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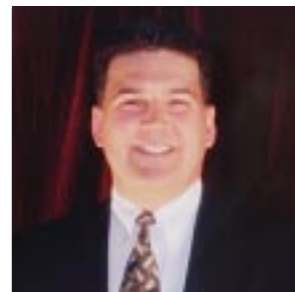
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### ***\*Editorial Board***

Note: Judges' portraits are arranged according to 1998 assignments.



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John P. Gallagher  
*Photographer*



Lillian Drozdowski  
*Photography Assistant*

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Birch, W., *BIRCH'S VIEWS OF PHILADELPHIA*, (1982)  
Collins, Herman LeRoy, *PHILADELPHIA-A STORY OF PROGRESS*, (1941)  
Eastman, Frank M., *COURTS AND LAWYERS-PENNSYLVANIA*, (1922)  
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The Free Library of Philadelphia  
The Theodore F. Jenkins Memorial Law Library  
Philadelphia Department of Records  
Office of City Archives  
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Brainstorming session.