

**Remarks of Andrew F. Susko, President of the Pennsylvania Bar Association, at the Swearing In Ceremony for Chief Justice Ronald D. Castille
January 14, 2008**

Chief Justice Emeritus Ralph Cappy, Chief Justice Ronald Castille, esteemed Justices of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, Governor Ed Rendell, Attorney General Corbett, Mayor Nutter, distinguished judges and fellow Pennsylvania attorneys, family, friends and guests of Chief Justice Ronald Castille, may it please this Honorable Court. It is truly a privilege and high honor for me to congratulate Chief Justice Ronald Castille, on behalf of the 29,000 members of the Pennsylvania Bar Association, on his ascension to the position of chief justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. At this special time, it is entirely fitting and appropriate that we reflect on both the institution of the Supreme Court and the man about to become the highest officer of the highest court in Pennsylvania.

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court is the oldest supreme court in the country, predating even the United States Supreme Court. Its existence, as an independent court and the first of its kind in the colonies, was skillfully developed by then speaker of the Pennsylvania House, Chester County lawyer David Lloyd, in an agreement with the King of England. The result of a great political compromise, the Judiciary Bill creating the first colonial independent judiciary, passed in 1722, some 285 years ago.

The fact that at an independent Supreme Court was first created right here in Pennsylvania, is a testament to Pennsylvania legal community's longstanding commitment to a justice system that, from its inception, was envisioned to answer to the rule of law, not the king. We only need to look at the recent events in Pakistan to know exactly how blessed we are to have an independent judiciary, one centered on protecting against the tyranny of the majority and preserving and protecting the individual rights and liberties of all Pennsylvanians, in accordance with the law. At the Pennsylvania Bar Association, we are confident these principles will be secure in the hands of our new chief justice.

Just as this court protects and defends the rights of the individual, the organized bar and legal profession, have the obligation to stand up and protect our justice system. The judiciary has no power, separate from the authority granted by the Constitution and the well expressed reason of their opinions; the court has no authority to fund itself, to appropriate money, to levy a tax, or to raise an army to protect itself or enforce its orders.

Indeed, the court has little, if any, ability to defend itself against an institutional attack. The Pennsylvania Bar Association was so proud of our legal community and local bar associations, who came together this past fall, to stand united in opposition to an effort to oust all sitting judges up for retention election, an effort that threatened the very independence of our judges and justice system itself.

Judges must be free and independent to follow and preserve the rule of law, though not independent from the rule of law. The chief justice must, above all else, make sure the judiciary remains free from political interference or intimidation, public pressure or coercion, and free

from financial consequence or penalty. A judiciary decides cases based on the facts and merits of the matter before them, no matter how unpopular that decision may be.

Chief Justice Castille, who is about to accept his commission as chief justice today, possesses outstanding attributes that will serve him well as he assumes the role of chief justice. The chief justice's responsibilities extend beyond the determination of individual cases; they include the administration of the courts to ensure that the justice system is fair and accessible to all Pennsylvanians.

Importantly, the chief justice is charged with the obligation to demand and obtain the best from the members of this high court, both in terms of individual participation and collective decision-making to reach compromise, when appropriate, and to create an environment where disagreement among individual justices can occur, without adverse effect to the pending case or the decision-making process for future cases. To do this well, requires a chief justice who possesses great leadership, skill, wisdom, understanding and patience.

To his newly assumed duties, Chief Justice Castille brings an intellectual capability second to none. A National Merit Scholar in high school, an Academic Scholar at Auburn University and a law degree from the University of Virginia School of Law, which he earned with distinction. Chief Justice Castille has exhibited great intellectual ability and a tremendous capacity to cut decisively through peripheral items to the very heart and essence of a legal matter.

He brings a deep passion for public service, service for the betterment of his country and the legal profession. That service includes, notably, his combat duty in the United States Marine Corp in Vietnam. A decorated war veteran, he demonstrated great courage and valor, placing his life in harms way and ultimately sacrificing his leg in the line of duty for our country. His passion for public service continued during a 14-year tenure as an assistant in the district attorney's office, before he was elected to serve as the district attorney of Philadelphia. And, closer to this court, he was elected as a justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in 1994, and was retained by the voters in Pennsylvania in 2004.

Perhaps most importantly is Chief Justice Castille's quiet but strong and tenacious leadership ability. From his service in Vietnam as a platoon leader, to his days at the district attorney's office where he ultimately went on to lead that office, to now holding the highest judicial office in the commonwealth, Chief Justice Ron Castille has exhibited a lifetime of leadership and dedication to the principles, ideals and aspirations that we as lawyers hold dear. For those in the legal community who know him well, there is no doubt that His Honor will be a great chief justice of our Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

We are confident that Chief Justice Castille will call upon his leadership abilities directing a very strong and exceptional Supreme Court. No single justice is better positioned and skilled to bring this court together as one for the betterment of our justice system and the legal profession than Chief Justice Ronald Castille. We too at the bar association look forward to working together with the court to improve our legal system and promote equal access to justice for all persons in the commonwealth.

Judges across Pennsylvania share a commitment to fairness and impartiality in the application of the rule of law. For the judiciary, the ideals of deciding cases fairly and based solely on the facts and law presented, reaching decisions free from outside influence and pressure, and making rulings even in the face of strong opposition from the majority, are essential and among the highest ideals of judicial service. For a select few, these ideals become so ingrained and so deeply embedded, they quite literally become character traits of an individual judge. And so it is with Chief Justice Ronald Castille. He is a man of great honor, integrity and has conducted himself with a selfless dedication to achieving what is best in our noble legal profession and justice system. On behalf of the nearly 29,000 members of the Pennsylvania Bar Association, we celebrate this important moment with great joy in having such a good man, a man of honor and integrity, ascend to the highest position on the highest court in Pennsylvania. We offer our heartfelt congratulations to Chief Justice Ron Castille.