

**Committee
for
Proposed
Standard
Jury
Instructions**

1996 Membership:

Civil Instructions Committee

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Perry S. Bechtle, Esq.

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James Lewis Griffith, Esq.

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Criminal Instructions Subcommittee

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William H. Lamb, Esq., *Co-chairman*

Honorable John N. Sawyer

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Staff:

Susan Howard Swope, *Assistant Reporter and Secretary*

Legal Authorization:

Pa. Constitution Article V, § 10(c)

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History/Background

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court Committee for Proposed Standard Jury Instructions was first appointed in 1968 by Chief Justice John C. Bell for the express purpose of developing pattern jury charges for the assistance of both the bench and the bar. The committee's mission from the outset has been to assist the administration of justice in both civil and criminal court proceedings through the availability of model jury instructions.

As a result, the committee has published comprehensive volumes of suggested civil and criminal jury instructions. The suggested instructions guide judges and lawyers and support research and preparation of instructions during the trial process.

With the publication of these volumes, the ongoing function of the committee is to monitor developments in civil and criminal law, recommending and publishing revised and new instructions as required.

In developing updates to the civil and criminal instructions, the committee, through its subcommittees, makes every effort to ensure that the instructions are useful to judges and lawyers and at the same time comprehensible to jurors. In the initial publication of the instructions a Socio-Legal Subcommittee was formed to review the language of each instruction in order to assist jurors in their understanding of the principles of law. This subcommittee is no longer in existence.

Since 1979 the Pennsylvania Bar Institute (PBI) has provided both administrative and publishing support for the committee, as

well as funding for this important work. Project costs are underwritten through the sale and distribution of the published suggested standard instructions to the legal community.

1996 Activities

The seventh supplement to the Criminal Jury Instructions was published in 1995. With this supplement, the criminal instructions are now available on computer diskette. In 1996 the reporter continued his research toward future supplements.

The Civil Jury Instructions subcommittee also continued researching and drafting revised and new jury instructions for a third supplement to the Civil Jury Instructions. It is planned that this supplement will be published within the next year. At that time, the civil jury instructions will also be available on diskette.

Contact Person

Members of the bench and bar are urged to provide their comments and suggestions to the committee. Such comments are of great assistance to the reporters and subcommittee members in their ongoing efforts to ensure that the instructions reflect the current state of the law in Pennsylvania.

Those interested may write to Susan Howard Swope, Esq. at Pennsylvania Bar Institute; 5080 Ritter Road; Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-6903, may e-mail her at sswope@pbi.org, or may call either 800-932-4637 or 717-796-0804, ext. 260. 