



## ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

Public Information Office

### **Interbranch Commission for Gender, Racial and Ethnic Fairness**

What Does This Commission Do?

The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania is committed to the goal of ensuring that people of every race, gender and ethnic background are treated fairly and respectfully throughout the state legal system, and that no one in the courts is subjected to discrimination.

The Interbranch Commission for Gender, Racial and Ethnic Fairness was formed in 2005 at the suggestion of the late Chief Justice Ralph J. Cappy to forge that goal into reality, not only in the judicial branch, but in the legislative and executive branches of state government.

The commission, the only panel of its type in the nation, has worked to improve interpreter services for the courts and state agencies, to standardize jury selection procedures for statewide use, to improve public understanding of the nature of domestic violence and to increase the ranks of public defenders. Other goals are to build a more diverse workforce within the court system and to establish a statewide policy on equal employment opportunity and nondiscrimination in the courts.

The Supreme Court, the governor and the legislature each appoint eight members to the commission, which is racially and ethnically diverse and includes judges, lawyers, legislators and community advocates. The commission was formed as the result of a study ordered by the Supreme Court in 1999 to determine whether women and minorities were receiving equal justice in the courts. In 2003 a special committee, appointed by the court to conduct the study, issued a report making 173 recommendations to address inequities.

The role of the interbranch commission is to implement the recommendations made in the 2003 report, to suggest other ways to reduce or eliminate discrimination in state government and in the legal profession and to increase public confidence in the fairness of state government at all levels.

For more information on the commission, visit the commission's Web site at [www.pa-interbranchcommission.com](http://www.pa-interbranchcommission.com).