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Dauphin County



COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
Twelfth Judicial District

Deputy Court Administrators

DEBORAH S. FREEMAN, ESQ.
Civil Court
780-6630

VICTOR D. RILEY, ESQ.
Criminal Court
780-6640

TROY A. PETERY
Magisterial District Judge
780-6636

DATE

Joseph Mittleman
Director of Judicial Programs
Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts
1515 Market Street – Suite 1414
Philadelphia, PA 19101

RE: DAUPHIN COUNTY REDISTRICTING PLAN

Dear Mr. Mittleman:

Please find enclosed the redistricting plan for the Twelfth Judicial District of Pennsylvania. Included are a Judicial District Summary Worksheet and 15 Magisterial District Worksheets. Also included for your assistance are a map showing a breakdown of the Magisterial Districts (including the various wards and precincts included in those districts) and as a map showing the major roadways in Dauphin County.

Because the statistics provided show that Dauphin County has an average caseload that is 15% higher than other counties of comparable size, we are not proposing to eliminate any districts at this time. We are in fact proposing a complete reestablishment of all current Magisterial Districts in the county.

For historical purposes, in February 2011, upon learning of Magisterial District Judge Joseph Solomon's decision to retire, Dauphin County President Judge Todd A. Hoover submitted a recommendation on March 1st, 2011 to close Magisterial District Court 12-1-03. The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, in an order dated July 29th, 2011 eliminated this district effective September 2nd, 2011. As part of the elimination of this district, we have already realigned the five remaining Magisterial Districts within the City of Harrisburg.

After seeking guidance from the AOPC because of the complexity of our situation, Dauphin County's redistricting plan is done in two phases: The city of Harrisburg and the rest of the suburban Magisterial District offices.

CITY OF HARRISBURG

The city realignment done in September 2011 affected all Magisterial Districts in the city. While only two of the districts received wards of former Magisterial District Court 12-1-03, all city Magisterial Districts were realigned in an attempt to achieve caseload equity. Because of the realignment, we do not have accurate and up to date statistical information on these districts.

In order to complete the Judicial District Summary Worksheets for the offices within the city limits, we used the statistics provided in the redistricting packet when the caseload and workload figures were known. This was done with the knowledge that each Magisterial District absorbed current and future work as a result of the elimination of Magisterial District Court 12-1-03. The realignment completed in 2011 for the city was done with the goal of seeing caseload and workload equity, but until we get statistics from the new districts, we cannot be sure that goal is met.

SUBURBAN OFFICES

Because, as noted above, the current caseload and workload figures for the realigned city districts are at this point unknown, the ten suburban Magisterial District Courts were analyzed separately from the city Magisterial District Offices in an attempt to show a more accurate assessment of how each Magisterial District compared to the others. We partitioned and analyzed the known and accurate suburban statistics from the overall figures.

The overall redistricting plan submitted by Dauphin County reveals an interesting geographic layout comprised of a wide range of socioeconomic, population and caseload inequalities among the various Magisterial Districts. Dauphin County is typically broken down into three separate areas: the city, the suburbs, and northern Dauphin County.

The city of Harrisburg is associated with high population density and higher crime rates. The suburban areas are typically growing populations with high retail industry, which results in increased civil disputes, crime and traffic cases. The northern tier is generally made up of large areas of sparsely populated rural areas with low crime rates.

As a result of this makeup, it is very difficult to realign the entire county to achieve caseload equity. A majority of our busy districts are centrally located within the county; this leaves us with no realignment options that would work without disrupting police services and seriously inconveniencing the constituents of the various Magisterial Districts.

We recognize the need to provide some assistance to a few of offices. While realignment would be the ideal solution, our analysis reveals that, with the layout of our county, it is just not the best solution. Ultimately, we feel that we could best achieve a more equitable caseload distribution through internal administrative measures, rather than through realignment.

Our proposal was put out for public inspection on February 1, 2012. Comments received are also attached for your review.

We are free to discuss this proposed redistricting plan at your convenience. Please feel free to reach out to us if you should have any questions or concerns.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Troy A. Petery
Deputy District Court Administrator—MDJs

attachments

Pc:

The Hon. Todd A. Hoover, P.J.
Carolyn C. Thompson, Esquire, District Court Administrator
All MDJs