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NEWS RELEASE

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Supreme Court to Take Luzerne County Case Rarely Used King's Bench Powers to Be Used

HARRISBURG, February 2, 2009 - Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ronald D. Castille said today the Supreme Court will exercise its King's Bench Powers to address whether Luzerne County juvenile defendants were improperly sentenced to detention. Two Luzerne County judges are accused of having benefitted financially in connection with juvenile sentencing.

"The court views this matter with grave concern," said Chief Justice Castille in announcing the action.

The Supreme Court on Wednesday, January 28, relieved former Luzerne County President Judge Mark A. Ciavarella of all judicial duties and revoked the certificate of Senior Judge Michael T. Conahan barring him from serving as a senior judge.

Ciavarella and Conahan have been charged by the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Middle District of Pennsylvania with wire fraud and depriving the public of their honest service. Both judges have agreed to plead guilty.

Prior to the filing of the criminal charges against the judges, the Supreme Court on January 8, 2009, denied a petition by the Juvenile Law Center of Philadelphia asking the court to exercise its King's Bench powers to intervene in the cases of Luzerne juveniles sentenced to detention without counsel.

On Friday, the Juvenile Law Center renewed and expanded its request to the Supreme Court to take the case under review.

The Court today vacated its January 8 order.

Chief Justice Castille said: "In light of the information revealed by the U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Pennsylvania and the expanded petition filed by the Juvenile Law Center, we will exercise our King's Bench and constitutional supervisory powers in this matter."

In exercising its King's Bench and supervisory powers, the Court takes a case for immediate review and out of the normal channels of litigation in the lower courts. This occurs rarely and only when the Court sees a matter of immediate public importance at stake.

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**IN THE SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA
MIDDLE DISTRICT**

IN RE: J.V.R.; H.T., A MINOR THROUGH: No. 81 MM 2008
HER MOTHER, L.T.; ON BEHALF OF :
THEMSELVES AND SIMILARLY :
SITUATED YOUTH :

ORDER

PER CURIAM

AND NOW, this 2nd day of February 2009, this Court's Order dated January 8, 2009, in the above matter is hereby vacated pending further Order of the Court. See PA. CONST. art. V, § 10; 42 Pa.C.S. § 502.