

NEWS RELEASE

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Supreme Court of Pennsylvania Adopts New Rules Governing Inactive Attorneys

HARRISBURG, April 16, 2009 — The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania today adopted a series of changes regarding the fees, reinstatement and categorization of the Commonwealth's nearly 27,000 inactive attorneys.

“We recognize the skills and experience of the many attorneys who chose to become inactive or retire,” Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ronald D. Castille said. “These rule changes will help expedite the process of reinstating these attorneys if they desire to return to active practice. The new procedures will also help ensure the integrity of the legal profession by allowing the Court to quickly address violations by those attorneys who fail to comply with mandatory registration and licensing requirements.”

One of the primary changes is the imposition of a new annual fee of \$70 imposed on attorneys who voluntarily become inactive, but do not actually retire. The Commonwealth's nearly 2,000 retired attorneys will not be subject to the new fee. The inactive attorney fee takes effect in the 2009-2010 assessment year.

New streamlined procedures for the reinstatement of attorneys who have been inactive for more than three years also are a part of the changes adopted by the Court. If the Disciplinary Counsel for the Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court does not oppose a reinstatement petition, the review and approval time is significantly shortened, and there will be no need for the attorney to personally appear for a reinstatement hearing.

The changes also create a new “administrative suspension” category for those attorneys who are inactive because of a Supreme Court order for something like failing to comply with continuing legal education requirements or other infraction. Under the rule changes ordered today, inactive attorneys placed under the newly created category have a one-year period to comply with the requirements or be administratively suspended. Attorneys administratively suspended are subject to a \$300 reinstatement fee.

Other changes include one that clarifies the appropriate place for the collection of assessment forms and fees as the Attorney Registration Office, rather than the AOPC.

(A copy of the order can be found at: www.pacourts.us/T/SupremeCourt/SupremePostings.htm)