

MESSAGE FROM CHIEF JUSTICE MYRON T. STEELE



Honorable Myron T. Steele

“The most sacred of the duties of a government [is] to do equal and impartial justice to all its citizens.” -

Thomas Jefferson, 1816

As we celebrate the Delaware Judiciary’s Tradition of Excellence in this 2006 Annual Report of the Judiciary, we do so in recognition that the foundation of this tradition is that function which Jefferson deemed the “most sacred of the duties of a government” - the provision of equal and impartial justice. The tradition of excellence is, at its core, one of service to the Delaware community.

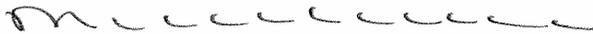
This tradition starts with the high quality of our judges. Judges in Delaware are chosen by a merit selection process and view their selection as an opportunity to serve the public. Our tradition of excellence is also based in the expertise of all of our courts, especially our specialized trial courts, all of which are nationally and internationally recognized as leaders in their respective fields. The Supreme Court and the Court of Chancery are renowned in the area of corporate law (important factors in attracting corporations to the State of Delaware). The Superior Court, in addition to its emphasis on providing fair and speedy criminal proceedings, has significant expertise in the handling of commercial litigation and has led our recognition for five straight years, including this year, as the premier forum for commercial litigation in the nation, by the Harris Poll State Liability Systems Ranking Study by the United States Chamber of Commerce Institute for Legal Reform.

Our other courts are also crucial to the Judicial Branch’s tradition of excellence. The Family Court has played a leadership role in the field of juvenile justice, with a strong commitment to reviewing and improving juvenile justice practices in ways that further both public safety and rehabilitative outcomes. The Court of Common Pleas has excelled in the development of specialized courts, including the first Mental Health Court in the State of Delaware, which it instituted in 2003. The Justice of the Peace Court is, in many ways, a leader among its peers nationally, having placed a strong emphasis on professionalism by providing initial and continuing legal education to its mainly lay judiciary.

This year we mark many milestones in our tradition of excellence: the 55th anniversary of the founding of the modern Supreme Court, the 175th anniversary of the Superior Court, the 35th anniversary of the Family Court, and the 40th anniversary of the Justice of the Peace Court. As we celebrate these anniversaries, we also look forward to a continuing of our tradition of excellence in the future. We especially look forward to significant advances in the use of technology in court processes as the initial implementation phases of a new case management system began this fall in the Justice of the Peace Court. This will be the culmination of several years of commitment from all of the courts and we eagerly await the many benefits to be forthcoming from this project. We also anticipate the further expansion of the Supreme Court's e-filing initiative which, along with similar initiatives which have been undertaken by the Court of Chancery and the Superior Court, reduces dependency on paper documents and saves time and money for the public, litigants, and the courts.

While we celebrate the Judicial Branch's tradition of excellence, we realize that this tradition could not exist without the continuing support and partnership of the other branches of government. I am grateful for the important role in this tradition played by Governor Minner and the General Assembly and wish to take this opportunity to thank them for providing the assistance to make possible the Judicial Branch's tradition of excellence that we celebrate in this Annual Report.

Respectfully,



Myron T. Steele