



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

# NEWS RELEASE

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**DRAFT**

## **Philadelphia Municipal and Common Pleas Courts Offer On-line Payments e-Pay Feature Expected to Improve Court Collections**

**HARRISBURG, PA, June 9, 2010**—As part of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court’s ongoing efforts to improve court collections, on June 7 the Philadelphia Municipal and Common Pleas courts began offering “e-Pay”—a Web-based application for the state’s criminal case management systems that allows defendants to make court payments via the Internet with a credit or debit card.

Chief Justice Ronald D. Castille said, “e-Pay is yet another tool designed by our Judicial Automation staff to assist court officials in performing their duties. The new feature allows the public to securely pay court financial obligations via the Internet, eliminating the need to visit a court office or mail a check. In addition, court staff will be able to quickly process payments received without assisting customers and re-entering payment data into the system.”

The Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) is providing this service at no cost to the county. A transaction convenience fee of \$2.75 will be charged to the user. A person interested in making court payments online will navigate to the Unified Judicial Web Portal at <http://ujportal.pacourts.us/>, select the e-Commerce/e-Pay link, then search for his/her cases/payment plans. The payment amount will be entered along with the credit or debit card information. The Web application will send the user a payment confirmation generated by the e-Pay vendor and court officials will get a notification that a payment is pending.

Defendants will be able to pay fines, costs and restitution for criminal cases through e-Pay. The processing of payments is dependent upon the individual court to which the payment has been made. Courts may restrict certain individuals or cases from online payment.

Within the last two months, 18 Common Pleas courts and magisterial district courts in 14 counties and have implemented e-Pay. These courts have received a total of more than \$75,000 through the new online payment application.

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Amy Ceraso, AOPC Director of Judicial Automation said, “The e-Pay application promises to further improve court collections. Unlike credit/debit card payment functions that may currently exist with some counties, the statewide e-Pay function is ‘online,’ and it is fully integrated with both the magisterial and Common Pleas court systems. Consequently, when e-Pay is implemented statewide, users will have a one-stop shop for payment of fines, costs and restitution with the ability to search for and locate cases and/or payment plans with balances due across courts and counties.”

Over the years, the statewide court case management systems have significantly enhanced efforts to collect and disburse court fees, fines and costs. In 2009, despite a weak economy and 4.5 percent fewer court filings, magisterial district and Common Pleas courts throughout Pennsylvania collected and disbursed a total of \$461 million to the state, counties, municipalities and crime victims. **Philadelphia Municipal and Common Pleas courts** disbursed more than \$13 million last year. This total excludes payments processed by the Philadelphia Traffic Court.

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