



News Release

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Chief Justice Forms Joint Committee to Examine Criminal Justice Process

Chief Justice Stuart Rabner has announced the formation of the Supreme Court Joint Committee on Criminal Justice to focus on how to reduce delays in bringing criminal court cases to trial and the issue of bail.

The chief justice will serve as the committee chair. Several judges, including assignment judges and judges with experience on the criminal bench, have accepted the chief justice's invitation to serve on the committee, as have representatives from the Office of the Attorney General, the Office of the Public Defender, the New Jersey State Bar Association, the Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, and private attorneys.

Chief Justice Rabner said, "Our courts handle a tremendous number of cases thanks to the hard work, dedication and innovation of our judges and staff. But we need to do more to address the need for speedier access to justice in criminal cases by working with our partners in government and in the private bar.

"There are consequences when criminal cases don't move as quickly as they should. Witnesses are less likely to be available to testify, and their memories dim over time. Victims lose hope of receiving a prompt, just outcome. Defendants who are unable to make bail remain in jail as they await trial. There also are financial costs to taxpayers and to defendants and their families. All of these issues must be considered as we seek to expedite the trial process without shortchanging due process rights."

The committee will examine issues related to pretrial delay identified by a working group of judges who began meeting last year. Members will discuss procedures used to address those issues and suggest innovative, alternative approaches.

The committee also will examine the issue of bail and the predicament of defendants accused of less serious offenses who remain incarcerated because they cannot afford minimal bail.

Factors that contribute to pretrial delay and backlog, staffing standards for criminal courts, and the establishment of pre-indictment programs also will be examined.

A list of committee members is attached.

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