Learn about the Pennsylvania courts

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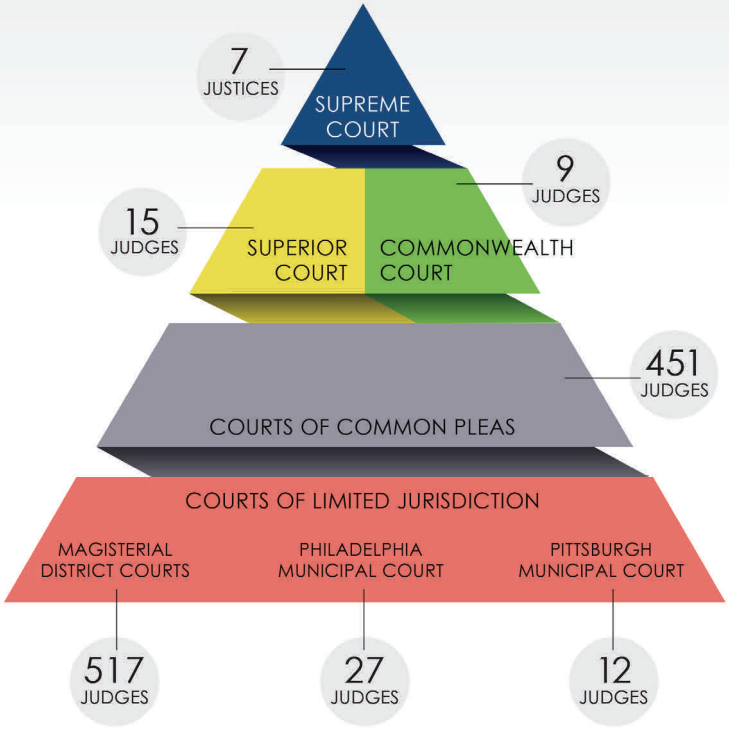

Pennsylvania Supreme Court:
The court of last resort in Pennsylvania and the oldest appellate court in the nation. Annually, the justices receive over 3,000 requests for appellate review. The court primarily hears appeals from Commonwealth and Superior courts, but also hears appeals in death penalty cases. It also supervises and oversees operations of the entire Pennsylvania court system.

Superior Court:
One of Pennsylvania's two intermediate appellate courts and often the final arbiter of legal disputes. This court is responsible for appeals in criminal and most civil cases from the Common Pleas Courts, and for applications under the wiretapping act.

Commonwealth Court:
Unique to Pennsylvania and one of Pennsylvania's two intermediate appellate courts. Responsible for matters involving state and local governments and regulatory agencies, it has both original and appellate jurisdiction.

Courts of Common Pleas:
The general trial courts of Pennsylvania, organized into 60 judicial districts. Each district has from one to 93 judges, a president judge and a court administrator. Generally, these courts hear appeals from the minor courts or matters involving children and families.

Courts of Limited Jurisdiction:
The first level of Pennsylvania's judiciary – also called the people's court – is presided over by magisterial district judges (MDJs) and municipal court judges. MDJs hear criminal summary and small claims cases, conduct preliminary arraignments and hearings, review emergency protection-from-abuse petitions, fix and set bail and issue arrest warrants.

Judge counts incude vacancies as of 10/21/16

AOPC