



Probation Association of New Jersey

Serving New Jersey Since 1904

An affiliate of the American Probation and Parole Association

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For Release: July 26, 2005

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PROBATION OFFICERS PREPARE APPEAL RULING ALLOWING REMOVAL OF SUPERVISORS WITHOUT CAUSE

*Probation Association Calls into Question Ruling Permitting
Arbitrary Team Leader Dismissals*

(TRENTON) – The Probation Association on New Jersey (PANJ) has filed an appeal with the Appellate Division of the Superior Court in opposition to a recent ruling allowing the Judiciary to remove supervisory probation officers without cause.

In a lawsuit filed by the Judiciary, and ruled on by Superior Court Judge Paulette Sapp-Peterson, the division claims it has the right to arbitrarily dismiss most supervisory officers – known as Court Services Supervisors -- regardless of job performance or length of service and without a hearing or advance notice.

The probation officers' labor union called the ruling astonishing because the lawsuit was filed by the Judiciary and ruled upon by one of its own employees, a Superior Court Judge, rather than a neutral arbitrator.

“Instead of allowing a neutral third-party arbitrator to resolve the dispute, the Judiciary predictably turned to its own court to rule on the fate of about 600 Team Leaders statewide,” said George Christie, president of PANJ. “The decision whether to allow the Judiciary to terminate supervisors without cause should be left to a neutral party instead of a judge who also reports to the branch.”

Christie noted that exposing approximately 600 Supervisors to termination without a hearing could create a public safety concern and poor morale within the probation division because probation officers report to them and already have staggeringly high caseloads.

(more)

“Our Supervisors and probation officers already deal with dangerous offenders who have committed crimes ranging from sexual assault to robbery to gun possession,” Christie said. “Should the Judiciary decide to arbitrarily terminate a supervisor, the gap in oversight of potentially dangerous probationers that would be created would cause an extreme public safety concern. This is a detrimental ruling for the public, as well as the probation officers.”

There are an estimated 130,000 adults and 20,000 juveniles under the supervision of probation officers who have average individual caseloads of 187 probationers.

PANJ has filed its appeal with the Appellate Division within the month, seeking to overturn Sapp-Peterson’s decision.

Established in 1904, PANJ represents and protects the interests of more than 2,800 probation officers and supervisors from every corner of the state. The Supervisors and probation officers work in 15 vicinages that cover New Jersey’s 21 counties.

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