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Submitted via: [rjacomments@pacourts.us](mailto:rjacomments@pacourts.us)

Dear Mr. Moulton,

I appreciate the opportunity to opine on the recently proposed omnibus amendments to the Pennsylvania Rules of Judicial Administration that were published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* on Aug. 5, 2023.


While the contents of the amendments are wide-ranging, I write specifically regarding the proposed elimination of the Judicial Council of Pennsylvania. I recommend against abolishing the Judicial Council as a standing entity. Its unique composition carries great potential to gather feedback from a broad swath of stakeholders as court considers ways to improve the administration of justice.

The three distinct yet interrelated branches of government form the legal foundation of both the nation and the Commonwealth. An independent judiciary is of utmost importance. Recognizing this, the Pennsylvania Constitution rightly provides the court with broad and nearly unfettered governance of the judicial branch. As a legislator, I respect and esteem this separation, purposefully avoiding informal dialogue with judges to prevent even the possibility of improperly influencing a matter before the courts.

But the courts are not an island, and providing a formalized structure for an advisory body that is recognized, respected, and available at the pleasure of the court has significant value – especially in today’s climate. As noted by Chief Justice Flaherty in 1998, “The Judicial Council...help(s) provide the dynamic, consultative leadership which is essential as the Commonwealth and my colleagues on the Court wrestle with complex administrative issues inherent to modern state judicial systems.” I agree.

Thoughtful and knowledgeable inter-branch collaboration via an official and transparent body, rather than informal or ad-hoc efforts, is in the best interest of good governance. The Judicial Council has served in that capacity in the past, and can (and should) serve in that capacity in the future. With this in mind, I respectfully recommend the Supreme Court consider continuance and revitalization of the Judicial Council of Pennsylvania.

Kind Regards –

  
John Lawrence  
State Representative  
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