

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**From: Michael T. Vough, President Judge  
11<sup>th</sup> Judicial District of Pennsylvania  
Court of Common Pleas of Luzerne County**

**MEDIA RELEASE:**

In complying with the decennial reestablishment of magisterial districts as mandated by 42 Pa. C.S.A. § 1503, Luzerne County President Judge Michael T. Vough has approved a proposed plan for Magisterial District Court redistricting, also referred to as re-establishment. The proposed Luzerne County Magisterial District Plan is available for review in the Office of Court Administration, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Luzerne County Courthouse, 200 N. River Street, Wilkes-Barre, PA. 18711, and on the internet at [www.luzernecounty.org](http://www.luzernecounty.org).

Public comment on the proposed re-establishment plan is invited. Interested parties may submit written comments. Comments may also be submitted by email. Comments must be received on or before 4:00 p.m. Monday, February 28, 2022.

Submit comments to:  
Paul Hindmarsh, District Court Administrator  
Luzerne County Courthouse  
200 North River Street  
Wilkes-Barre, PA. 18711  
Or by email: [Paul.Hindmarsh@luzernecounty.org](mailto:Paul.Hindmarsh@luzernecounty.org)

## **MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT COURT RE-ESTABLISHMENT GENERAL INFORMATION**

Judicial redistricting, also referred to as re-establishment, is a statutorily required process that takes place once every 10 years to determine how to allocate state Court system resources to best serve the Commonwealth's citizens.

The statewide process of redrawing Magisterial District Court boundaries is conducted by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

The President Judge is required to submit a re-establishment plan for each Judicial District. President Michael T. Vough has approved the proposed re-establishment plan for Luzerne County.

A comprehensive analysis of the configuration of each Magisterial District in Luzerne County was undertaken to insure that the Magisterial District Courts can appropriately serve the County's residents over the next decade.

In addition to case filing statistics, a new measure was developed to differentiate among case types and the resulting Judicial workload that arises from those filings. This measure was developed by a committee of approximately twenty Magisterial District Judges (MDJ's) from Districts of varying size and demographics, representative of the Commonwealth; and is based upon empirical studies of the amount of Judge time required to process each case type. Actual case filings are then adjusted by the relative case type weights from the study. This measurement is called workload since it measures not just the volume of filings within a Magisterial District, but the relative amount of work required by the Judge.

Presently, there are sixteen Magisterial District Courts serving Luzerne County. The proposed plan provides for the re-establishment of all sixteen District Courts.

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## MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT COURTS

Magisterial District Courts, also called special Courts or Courts of limited jurisdiction, constitute the “grass roots” level of Pennsylvania’s Court system. For many Pennsylvanians, these are the first, and often the only, Courts they will ever encounter. Luzerne County Magisterial Courts handle over 60,000 cases per year.

Magisterial District Judges preside over Magisterial District Judge Courts.

They have the authority to:

- Conduct non-jury trials concerning criminal summary matters not involving delinquent acts as defined in 42 Pa.C.S. § 6301 *et seq*;
- Conduct non-jury trials concerning civil claims (unless the claim is against a Commonwealth party as defined by 42 Pa.C.S. § 8501) where the amount in controversy does not exceed \$12,000, exclusive of interests and costs, in the following classes of actions:
  - Landlord-tenant actions
  - Assumpsit actions unless they involve a contract where the title to real estate may be in question
  - Trespass actions
  - Fines and penalties by any Government agency
- Preside over Preliminary Arraignments and Preliminary Hearings
- Fix and accept bail, except in cases involving murder or voluntary manslaughter
- Issue arrest warrants
- Accept guilty pleas to the charges of Driving Under the Influence (75 Pa.C.S.A. § 3802) so long as it is a first offense, no personal injury occurred to a third party other than the Defendant’s immediate family, property damage to any third party is less than \$500 and the Defendant is not a juvenile; and
- Preside over non-jury trials involving all offenses under Title 34 (Game)