

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Governor Meyer Recognizes 60th Anniversary of the Justice of the Peace Court Joining the Delaware Judiciary

This week, Gov. Matt Meyer signed a proclamation recognizing the 60th Anniversary of the Justice of the Peace Court joining the Delaware State Court System.

The Justice of the Peace Court traces its roots to before the founding of the State of Delaware, through the Dutch and British colonies in the 1600s. For generations it was a separate court system to maintain what was called a “middle ground” between the citizens and the courts, with one notable feature being that the Justices of the Peace did not have to be attorneys, but rather citizens with “good sense and integrity,” a feature that continues to this day.

However, as the court evolved, the need for professionalism and standardization became clear and at the urging of the Delaware State Bar Association and others, Gov. Charles L. Terry signed into law legislation that brought the Justice of the Peace Court into the Delaware State Court system on March 31, 1965.

In a short ceremony at his Wilmington office on March 31, 2025, Gov. Meyer signed a proclamation commemorating the anniversary of that historic change, declaring the Justice of the Peace Court “a cornerstone of our state’s judicial system” that has provided the citizens of Delaware accessible, efficient and fair judicial services.

“I want to thank the Governor for this thoughtful recognition,” said Chief Magistrate Alan Davis, who attended the ceremony along with Court Administrator Elizabeth Petrick and Management Analyst III Jayme Govens. “Every day for the past 60 years, our judges and staff have worked to uphold the high standards of the Delaware judiciary. As we celebrate this milestone, we will redouble our efforts to make this the best example of a ‘people’s court’ in the nation.”

The Justice of the Peace Court handles civil cases involving debt, trespass, and claims under \$25,000, along with landlord tenant matters, most motor vehicle cases (excluding felonies), and its judicial officers act as “committing magistrates” setting bail in most criminal matters.

Chief Magistrate Davis said this is just the first event in what the court plans to be a year-long celebration of the court’s anniversary.