

NEWS & INSIGHTS

Hon. Lawrence F. Stengel (Ret.) Gives Testimony Before Pennsylvania Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing

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[Hon. Lawrence F. Stengel \(Ret.\)](#) gave testimony at the State Capitol Building in Harrisburg on October 2 for the Pennsylvania Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on statute of limitations with respect to claims of sexual abuse. As Chair of the Independent Oversight Committee for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia's Independent Reconciliation and Reparations Program (IRRP), Judge Stengel provided an overview of the program and its successes.

The IRRP was established to provide compensation to survivors of clergy sexual abuse independent of church influence. The Independent Oversight Committee is tasked with overseeing the claims process and regularly reviewing and examining Archdiocesan programs that relate to child protection and abuse survivor assistance.

[Judge Lawrence F. Stengel \(Ret.\) to Serve on Independent Oversight Committee for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia's Independent Reconciliation and Reparations Program](#)

In his testimony, Judge Stengel highlighted the program's victim-centered and confidential approach, stating that it "offers a trauma-informed program where survivors can come forward, disclose the harms they have endured, and obtain assistance in a way that respects their dignity." He also emphasized that the IRRP is fully independent of the church.

The State Senate is considering a bill that would lift the civil and criminal statute of limitations for child and adult victims of sexual abuse and create a two-year retroactive window allowing victims the opportunity to file suit against their abuser and/or the institution that allegedly concealed the abuse.

However, the purpose of the informational session was "to find broader agreement on better remedies for abuse victims," said Sen. Lisa Baker, chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, as the hearing opened. "We are not here to decide the fate of specific bills before us; rather, we are weighing the anticipated benefits or drawbacks to the principles contained within those measures."

The Senate Judiciary Committee heard from 21 panelists including attorneys, survivors and victim's advocate organizations from across the state. More information about the hearing, including a list of all the panelists and a full recording of their testimonies can be found on the Pennsylvania Senate Judiciary Committee website [here](#). Judge Stengel's full written testimony is also available [here](#).

Judge Stengel serves as the chair of Saxton & Stump's Internal Investigations group and served for fourteen years as a federal judge, including as Chief Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. He also served for fourteen years as a judge on the Lancaster Court of Common Pleas. Judge Stengel also leads [Optimal Dispute Resolutions](#), a rapidly growing regional and national ADR provider.

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