

Introduction to the Commonwealth Court

Hello, I'm Kristen Brown. I'm the prothonotary for the Commonwealth Court, and as the prothonotary for the Commonwealth Court, I'm the supervisor of the Court's legal staff that are assigned outside of individual judges' chambers.

The Commonwealth Court is an intermediate appellate court. It hears appeals from the Courts of Common Pleas. It also hears appeals from state agencies. In part because this particular list is being argued in State College, all of the appeals here are appeals from Courts of Common Pleas, and as an intermediate appellate court, the Commonwealth Court sits routinely in panels of three.

Each month that we have an argument session, the court sits in a panel of seven for hearing arguments en banc. But today's arguments are all being presented to a three-judge panel. One of those judges will be assigned to write the opinion for the court and the other two judges who hear the arguments will be voting on the outcome of the case.

Keep in mind that for Commonwealth Court, unlike the Superior Court, all of the commission's judges will vote on the final disposition of this case, such that if the panel should disagree with the majority of the judges of the court, the case would be reassigned so that the disposition represents the conclusion of the entire court and not just the judges who will be hearing the arguments today.