Montgomery County Commissioners name new Public Defender

Norristown, PA (February 23, 2012) – The Montgomery County Commissioners today named Keir Bradford-Grey, currently an assistant federal public defender in Delaware, as the county’s Chief Public Defender. Bradford-Grey has 13 years’ experience as a public defender, and her record is one of accomplishment, innovation and passionate advocacy.

Bradford-Grey will be the first African-American and second woman to hold the position. She will also be the first African American woman to head a department in the county government. She is expected to begin work in the county on April 1. She will replace Stephen G. Heckman, who has been chief public defender since January 2008.

“We are extremely pleased and fortunate to have Ms. Bradford-Grey assume the very important responsibility as chief public defender in Montgomery County,” said Josh Shapiro, chair of the board of commissioners. “She is extremely qualified and experienced, and her vision for the office and her commitment to defending the indigent will help ensure that justice in Montgomery County is efficient and effective.”

Bradford-Grey joined the Delaware Federal Defenders Office in 2007, and between 1999 and 2007, she was an assistant public defender in Philadelphia. Among her accomplishments are:
- bringing the Delaware Federal Defender Office to number one in acquittals among the nation’s federal defender organizations by winning a number of cases
- pioneering the use of DNA, linguistics and handwriting expertise in constructing effective criminal defenses
- earning a reputation for high ethical standards, and a keen ability to combine research, analysis, logical reasoning and raw instinct to develop unconventional trial strategies
- demonstrating passionate and inspirational leadership and a concentration on mentoring, employee development, strategic planning and fostering teamwork

“As chief defender, my main objective will be to provide quality representation to indigent defendants,” Bradford-Grey said. “In providing quality representation we can insure that all verdicts are fair, correct, swift and final.”

Bradford-Grey said she will have several goals in mind when she assumes her role in Montgomery County. They include: reducing recidivism for juvenile offenders; protecting the public by reducing
wrongful convictions; respecting the victims of crime; efficiently using limited taxpayer resources; and, ensuring fair administration of justice from law enforcement.

“Children who come in contact with the delinquency courts too often have been neglected by the full range of support structures that normally channel children in constructive directions,” Bradford-Grey said. “When a child is brought to justice, with an attorney who has little to no resources to provide the child with standard needs during and after the adjudicatory process, the message of neglect and worthlessness continues, and the risk that the juvenile will commit more, and worse, crimes escalates becoming a concern of public safety.”

She also pointed to wrongful convictions as a threat to public safety. “When an innocent person is sent to jail as a result of a public attorney not having the time, tools and training to effectively advocate, the true perpetrator of the crime remains free to victimize and continue to put the public at risk” she said.

Bradford-Grey, who currently lives in Philadelphia, earned her undergraduate degree in criminal justice at Albany State University, and received her law degree from Ohio Northern University School of Law.

Shapiro thanked Heckman for his service to the county. “I sincerely thank Steve Heckman for his service to the county, and for agreeing to stay on during the transition period,” Shapiro said. “It is greatly appreciated.”