

Hinds Chancery Court begins accepting e-filing

April 3, 2013

Hinds Chancery Court began accepting electronically filed documents today, April 3. E-filing will become mandatory June 1 in Hinds Chancery Court, according to an order signed today by Senior Chancery Judge Denise Owens.

This makes e-filing available in Chancery Courts for the entire Jackson metro area. Rankin County Chancery Court moved to mandatory e-filing on Feb. 4. Madison County Chancery Court, the original pilot development site for Mississippi Electronic Courts (MEC), went to mandatory e-filing in September 2009.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. said, “The addition of Hinds and Rankin counties to MEC is a significant point of development in moving toward the goal of a unified statewide e-filing system for the judiciary. Almost 50 percent of the lawyers in this state live in Hinds, Rankin and Madison counties.”

Senior Hinds County Chancellor Denise Owens said e-filing will be efficient and convenient for the court, the attorneys and the public.

“It’s going to make the court more efficient, and of course with the clerk, it’s definitely going to make filing more efficient,” Judge Owens said. “We have a space issue, and e-filing is going to help with that. With the number of files we have in Hinds County, we are running out of space.”

Judge Owens noted that e-filing won’t create an obstacle for self-represented litigants. If a person seeking to file a document does not have access to a computer, the clerk’s office can help with the filing, she said.

Hinds County is the ninth county to utilize e-filing. E-filing became mandatory for Chancery Courts in Holmes and Yazoo counties on March 4, and on March 18 in Grenada County Chancery Court. E-filing was implemented earlier in the Chancery Court of DeSoto County. In Madison, Harrison and Warren counties, all trial courts – Chancery, Circuit and County Courts – use e-filing.

Chancery Courts in Lowndes and Webster counties and the Clay County Circuit Court are in the early stages of implementing e-filing systems. No dates have been set yet for those courts to begin accepting e-filing from attorneys.

E-filing is currently utilized only in civil cases. Madison County Circuit Court will be the first to use e-filing for criminal cases. Madison Circuit began staff training and in-house use of the criminal e-filing system on March 19. Dates have yet to be set to begin voluntary and mandatory e-filing in criminal cases.

Free training for attorneys and their staff will be provided by MEC at the Supreme Court Courthouse, 450 High Street in Jackson. Online registration is available at this link: http://courts.ms.gov/mec/mec_attorney_training.html.

Nearly half of the attorneys in the state are registered to use the MEC system. More than 3,400 attorneys currently have access to e-filing – 48 percent of the approximately 7,050 active practicing attorneys in the state. Also, more than 1,200 non-attorneys are currently registered to use the system to access court records.

The Mississippi Electronic Courts program, under the supervision of the Mississippi Supreme Court, is adapted from the electronic filing system used in federal district courts. Attorneys and their staffs may file and view documents 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Judges using MEC can access documents at any time and location via the Internet, allowing them to prepare for hearings and draft orders and opinions without waiting for paper files.

The initial pleading and case reopening pleading in any civil case must still be filed on paper in the office of the clerk in courts which use MEC. All subsequent pleadings are filed electronically.

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