

Access to Justice Commission to meet November 17

November 14, 2008

The Mississippi Access to Justice Commission will meet Monday, Nov. 17, at noon at the Mississippi Bar Center at 643 North State Street in Jackson.

Commission members and guests will gather at 11:30 a.m. for lunch. Commission Co-Chairs Chancery Judge Denise Owens and Joy Lambert Phillips will call the meeting to order at noon. The meeting is expected to conclude by 2:30 p.m.

The Commission is expected to hear updates from providers of civil legal assistance for the poor. People who work in the field are expected to outline recent developments in their programs. Those making presentations are expected to include:

- Catholic Charities Legal Assistance Clinic Senior Attorney and Program Manager Brandi Brown of Jackson;
- Mississippi College School of Law Dean Jim Rosenblatt, regarding the Mission First Legal Aid Office of Jackson;
- North Mississippi Rural Legal Services Executive Director Ben Cole II of Oxford;
- Mississippi Center for Legal Services Executive Director Sam Buchanan of Hattiesburg;
- Mississippi Center for Justice President and CEO Martha Bergmark of Jackson;

The Access to Justice Commission was created by the Mississippi Supreme Court in June 2006 to develop a unified strategy to improve poor people's access to the civil courts. The Commission is tasked to investigate the need for civil legal services to the poor in Mississippi, and to evaluate, develop and recommend policies, programs and initiatives which will assist the judiciary in meeting needs for civil legal services to the poor.

The Commission is made up of 21 voting members and eight ex-officio members. The Commission includes members of the judiciary, a representative of the Governor, legislators, business and community leaders, and members of the clergy. Representatives of entities which provide legal services to the poor are ex-officio members.

The Mississippi Access to Justice Commission works to address *civil* legal representation of the poor. It does not deal with indigent criminal defense issues.

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