

Domestic abuse study group to meet June 25

June 24, 2008

A commission created to study laws and rules related to domestic abuse will hold its first meeting Wednesday, June 25, at 11 a.m. at the Gartin Justice Building in Jackson.

The Commission for Study of Domestic Abuse Proceedings will meet in the fourth floor large conference room. Visitors must check in at the security desk on the first floor.

The Mississippi Supreme Court, acting on a request from the Mississippi Attorney General, created the Commission for Study of Domestic Abuse Proceedings in an order signed May 21.

The Commission is expected to submit a report to the Court by Dec. 1. The Supreme Court said that the Commission report's findings and recommendations should consider victim safety, equal access to the courts by victims and accused parties, due process, and offender accountability.

Supreme Court Justice Ann H. Lamar of Senatobia and Special Assistant Attorney General Heather Wagner of Jackson are co-chairs of the 23-member Commission.

Justice Lamar said, "Many individuals and families in this state are impacted by domestic violence. As a Court, we are particularly concerned with access to our courts for all of our citizens. We are also concerned that we have adequate and efficient procedures in place to address the needs of litigants and the court personnel involved in these proceedings."

Justice Lamar said, "The purpose of this Commission is to undertake a comprehensive study of statutes and rules relating to domestic violence issues and to identify and address needed changes. This Commission represents a cross section of individuals and groups who are particularly interested in this area of the law. They each bring a unique perspective to the study and we thank them for their willingness to serve."

Other Commission members include: University of Mississippi School of Law Professor Deborah Bell; Mississippi College School of Law Professor Shirley Kennedy; Court of Appeals Judge Virginia Carlton of Columbia; Chancery Judges Margaret Alfonso of Gulfport, Jaye Bradley of Lucedale, and Cynthia Brewer of Madison County; Circuit Judges Margaret Carey-McCray of Greenville, Vernon Cotten of Carthage, and Kenneth Thomas of Cleveland; Justice Court Judge Deborah Gambrell of Hattiesburg; Municipal Judge John Shirley of Pearl; Gulfport Assistant City Prosecutor Martha Carson; Assistant District Attorney Kassie Ann Coleman of Hattiesburg; Hinds County Public Defender William LaBarre; Hinds County Assistant Public Defender Lynn Watkins; Mississippi Association of Chiefs of Police Executive Director Ken Winter of Oxford; Jackson attorney Brandi Brown of Catholic Charities; Mississippi Coalition Against Domestic Violence Executive Director Anna Walker Crump of Jackson; Sen. Gray Tollison of Oxford; Rep. Kimberly Campbell of Jackson; and Mississippi Judicial College Director Cynthia Davis of Oxford.

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