

## **Judge Alfonso, Judge Patten honored for judicial excellence**

July 26, 2010

Chancellors Margaret Alfonso of Gulfport and Edward E. Patten Jr. of Hazlehurst were recently honored with the Mississippi Bar's Judicial Excellence Award.

Mississippi Bar outgoing President George Fair presented the awards July 10 at the conclusion of the Mississippi Bar Convention in Destin, Fla.

Judge Alfonso is senior chancery judge of the Eighth Chancery District, having served since 1999. The district includes Harrison, Hancock and Stone counties.

Judge Patten has served as chancellor of the Fifteenth Chancery District of Copiah and Lincoln counties since 1999.

The Mississippi Bar's Board of Commissioners established the Judicial Excellence Award in 2000 to recognize judges who exceed the call of their judicial office. Fair noted that the awards are presented to judges "who exemplify the quality and efficiency of justice and a person of high ideals, character and integrity."

Judge Patten said, "I thought one of the greatest privileges of my professional career was becoming an attorney and having the occasion to serve my clients and the Bar. However, when I was elected Chancellor, I discovered that each and every day gives me the opportunity to affect, hopefully in a positive manner, someone's life. I look forward to every day because of that profound possibility and challenge."

Judge Alfonso said, "All who are fortunate to be elected or appointed to judicial office aspire to be worthy of the title 'Judge.' To be accorded the honor the Bar has bestowed on me is beyond the highest expectation of approval I ever imagined. I am deeply honored and humbled by the generous assessment of my efforts to serve as a Chancery Court Judge."

It is the second time this year that the Bar has honored Judge Alfonso for her work. She was inducted as a Fellow of the Mississippi Bar, the highest honor given by the Bar Foundation, on April 15.

Judge Alfonso is a founding member of Professionals Advocating for Children Together (PACT), which was organized in 2002 to work on behalf of abused and neglected children. She was instrumental in creating a position of public guardian in 2002 in Harrison County to protect the interests of indigent minors and the elderly. She initiated the first Adoption Day for Harrison County in 2004, and has spearheaded efforts to organize the annual event to promote permanent placement of children.

She served on the Media and the Courts Study Committee in 2002, helping shape recommendations for camera coverage rules adopted by the Supreme Court in 2003. She served on the Commission for Study of Domestic Abuse Proceedings, which made recommendations to the Supreme Court and the Legislature in 2008.

She received the Alonzo Westbrook Public Service Award, John Mason Award from the Gulf Coast Victims' Right Coalition for Advocacy for Victims, and the Award of Excellence presented by the National Association of Legal Professionals.

Judge Alfonso was the first woman to be elected a Chancery Court judge in Hancock, Harrison and Stone counties. She is a former assistant district attorney for the Second Circuit

District of Harrison, Hancock and Stone counties, a former assistant county prosecutor for Harrison County, and a former family court prosecuting attorney. She also previously served as an assistant state's attorney for Cook County, Ill.

Judge Alfonso graduated from the University of Southern Mississippi with a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science, and she earned her law degree from the University of Mississippi School of Law.

Judge Patten is chairman of the Conference of Chancery Judges, having begun the two-year term in 2009. He previously served for two years as conference vice-chair. He currently serves as a member of the Mississippi Code of Judicial Conduct Study Committee, and as vice-chair of the Bench-Bar Liaison Committee.

Judge Patten recently concluded more than seven years of service on the Supreme Court Advisory Committee on Rules. He served for two years as vice-chair and more than three years as chairman. He previously served for four years on the Bar Complaints Tribunal. He served on the Task Force to Strengthen Confidence in the Legal System and on the Legislative Study Commission on the Mississippi Judicial System.

He was inducted in 2003 as a Fellow of the Mississippi Bar Foundation. He is a Mississippi Bar Commissioner and former president of the Copiah County Bar Association.

Judge Patten earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in pharmacy from the University of Mississippi before earning a law degree from the University of Mississippi School of Law. He practiced law in Hazlehurst before being elected to the bench.

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