

Access to Justice public hearing is February 1 in Jackson

January 28, 2010

The Mississippi Access to Justice Commission will conduct a public hearing about the unmet civil legal needs of poor people on Monday, Feb.1, at the Gartin Justice Building, 450 High Street in Jackson. The hearing is scheduled for 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Mississippi Supreme Court Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. will host the public hearing. Justice Jess H. Dickinson will serve as moderator. Justices George C. Carlson Jr., James E. Graves Jr., Ann H. Lamar and Randy G. Pierce will serve as a listening panel.

Testimony is expected from clients of the Mississippi Center for Legal Services, the Mississippi Youth Justice Project and Mission First, as well as from staff of those organizations. Testimony is also expected from judges and from representatives of Catholic Charities, Stew Pot Legal Clinic, the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project and law firms which provide pro bono legal representation to the poor.

The hearing is open to the public. The hearing will be webcast via the web site of the State of Mississippi Judiciary. The link is [here](#).

The hearing is the fifth and final in a series of regional public discussions about the need for civil legal services for the poor. Earlier public hearings have been held in Gulfport, Greenwood, Oxford and Meridian.

The purpose of these hearings is to create a record detailing the magnitude of the problems faced by low-income Mississippians as a result of their lack of access to legal assistance in a broad range of civil matters. The hearing will be transcribed. The Access to Justice Commission will use the testimony as part of the basis for recommendations to the Supreme Court, the Mississippi Legislature and the Mississippi Bar to increase the availability of legal assistance in civil matters.

At the end of the program there will be approximately 30 minutes for public comment from the audience. A sign up sheet will be available at the start of the hearing. The Commission will listen to as many people as may be accommodated in the time set aside for public comment. Members of the audience are asked to limit their presentations to two minutes.

The hearing will **not** address legal assistance in criminal matters.

The Supreme Court created the Access to Justice Commission in June 2006 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 the need for civil legal services to the poor in Mississippi. The Supreme Court called for a series of regional public discussions about the need for civil legal services for the poor.

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