

South Mississippi attorneys to hear e-filing presentations Jan. 13 and 14

January 7, 2014

Chancery Courts in Forrest, Lamar, Marion, Pearl River and Perry counties are expected to begin using electronic filing of court records in early 2014.

South Mississippi attorneys will hear plans for e-filing during bar meetings scheduled for Jan. 13 and 14. Mississippi Electronic Courts staff will present an overview of the e-filing system during three meetings with attorneys. The schedule is:

- Jan. 13, 12:30 p.m., Pine Belt Bar Association, Paul B. Johnson Chancery Building, Courtroom 1 on the second floor, 641 N. Main Street, Hattiesburg;
- Jan. 13, 3:30 p.m., Marion County Bar Association, Sebe Dale Jr. Chancery Court Building Courtroom, 250 Broad Street, Columbia;
- Jan. 14, noon, Pearl River County Bar Association, Pearl River Community College cafeteria, 101 Highway 11 North, Poplarville.

The Mississippi Electronic Courts (MEC) program, under the supervision of the Mississippi Supreme Court, is adapted from the electronic filing system used in federal district courts. MEC technology and training are provided free to counties. The only cost to local courts is computer hardware and Internet access, said MEC Counsel Clint Pentecost.

E-filing allows judges and attorneys to file and view documents 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and makes public access to court records more convenient. “The courthouse is now open 24 hours a day to file and view things” via Internet access, Pentecost said.

The Tenth Chancery District is the first to implement e-filing district-wide.

Tenth District Senior Chancellor Johnny Lee Williams of Hattiesburg said, “Our judicial system should utilize the available technology, as both the federal courts and neighboring states have done, to optimize the efficiency and productivity of the court system. The public deserves the best that we can give, so we intend to use these resources to make the court system proficient and responsive to the needs of the public.”

Tenth District Chancellor Dawn Beam of Sumrall, who is coordinating e-filing implementation, said, “We certainly want to run our courts as efficiently as possible, and technology allows us to better track our cases. We want litigants to be served as quickly and efficiently as possible.”

Pearl River County Bar Association President Claiborne “Buddy” McDonald of Picayune said, “It’s a positive thing and a step ahead. We need to make certain we grow with the times. When technology makes it better for the attorneys, the courts, the people and the public and less costly for all the people involved, we need to move into that area and take advantage of the changes and technology.”

E-filing is currently utilized in 21 trial courts in 12 counties, with more than 20 courts on a waiting list for implementation.

E-filing trial court jurisdictions currently include the Chancery Courts in Desoto, Grenada, Hinds, Holmes, Montgomery, Rankin, Webster and Yazoo counties; Chancery and

Circuit Courts in Clay County; and all trial courts – Chancery, Circuit and County Courts – in Madison, Harrison and Warren counties.

The Mississippi Supreme Court and Court of Appeals began accepting voluntary electronic filing of briefs and motions July 1, 2013. E-filing at the Supreme Court became mandatory for motions and briefs on Jan. 1, 2014.

About 4,150 attorneys – more than half of the attorneys in the state – are registered to use the MEC system. Also, more than 1,600 non-attorneys are registered to use the system to access court records.

Free training for attorneys and their staff is provided by MEC at the Supreme Court Courthouse, 450 High Street in Jackson, and in the venues in which e-filing is implemented. The training schedule and online registration are available at this link: http://courts.ms.gov/mec/mec_attorney_training.html.

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