

## **New members appointed to Access to Justice Commission**

Chancellor Jacqueline Mask of Tupelo was recently appointed to the Access to Justice Commission.

Other new members appointed to the Access to Justice Commission are attorney Gwendolyn Baptist-Hewlett of Southaven, and Jamie Bardwell of Jackson, deputy director of the Women's Foundation of Mississippi.

The Supreme Court also reappointed five members to the Commission. They are Court of Appeals Judge Donna Barnes of Tupelo, who chairs the commission's Delivery of Services Committee; Rep. Thomas U. Reynolds of Charleston, vice-chair of the House Judiciary A Committee; attorney Joy Lambert Phillips of Gulfport, former co-chair of the Access to Justice Commission and former Mississippi Bar president; Lela Keys of Clarksdale, a retired social worker who works with Delta Community Partners in Care; and attorney Dennis Smith of Jackson, former news director of WLBT-TV.

The Mississippi Supreme Court created the Access to Justice Commission in June 2006. The commission works to develop and recommend policies, programs and initiatives which will assist the judiciary in meeting needs for civil legal services to the poor.

Judge Mask, senior chancellor of the First Chancery District, is excited about working with an organization dedicated to improving poor people's access to the courts in civil matters.

"There is a tremendous need," she said at the May 6 quarterly Access to Justice meeting at the Mississippi Bar Center in Jackson. "Everyone deserves a chance to have their case heard and I want to get that done if we can. I know that we have a lot of hard work to do and I am thankful to have the opportunity to be a part of that."

Judge Mask has served for 15 years on the bench of the First Chancery District, which includes Alcorn, Itawamba, Lee, Monroe, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Tishomingo and Union counties. She previously served as public defender for the city of Tupelo for four years, and 15 years as public defender for Lee County Youth Court. In addition to her trial court duties, she has served as a presiding judge for the Bar Complaint Tribunal and as vice-chair and secretary of the Supreme Court's Committee on Continuing Judicial Education.

Baptist-Hewlett said she also is excited to join the commission. After the May 6 Access to Justice meeting, she said the discussions of ongoing initiatives "revitalized my interest in pro bono work for persons in need of legal services who can't afford it."

Baptist-Hewlett, an attorney and certified public accountant, practices tax law in Southaven. She is associate minister at New Hope Baptist Church in Southaven. She is a member of the Board of Bar Admissions.

Bardwell leads and manages the grantmaking and advocacy initiatives of the Women's Foundation of Mississippi, focusing on teen pregnancy prevention. She previously worked at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as a Presidential Management Fellow.