

Access to Justice Commission to meet on June 2 in Jackson

May 27, 2015

The Access to Justice Commission will meet at noon June 2 at the Mississippi Bar Center at 643 North State Street in Jackson. AJC members will gather for lunch at 11:30 a.m.

Members of the media are welcome to attend.

Access to Justice Commission Director Tiffany Graves will present a report about Commission activities, including free legal clinics and the expected completion of online forms to assist self-represented litigants.

Reports will be presented by committees working to address delivery of legal services for the poor, public awareness and resource development. Delivery System co-chairs are Beau Cole and Beth Orlansky. Public Awareness Committee co-chairs are Judge Chancery Jacqueline Mask of Tupelo and Humphreys County Circuit Clerk Timaka James-Jones. Supreme Court Presiding Justice Jess Dickinson and Mississippi College School of Law Dean Wendy Scott are co-chairs of the Resource Development Committee.

Access to Justice members who attended the 2015 Equal Justice Conference in Austin, Texas, on May 6-9 will share information gained from the conference. Jimmie Reynolds, director of government relations for the Mississippi Bar, will outline recent discussions with Congressmen regarding the need for funding for the Legal Services Corporation. LSC funding was one of the advocacy issues pressed by the American Bar Association during the recent ABA Day in Washington, D.C.

American Civil Liberties Union of Mississippi Staff Attorney Nusrat Jahan Choudhury and ACLU Legal Director Charles Irvin will make a presentation called "Debtors' Prison Practice."

The Access to Justice meeting is expected to conclude by 1:30 p.m.

The Access to Justice Commission was created by the Mississippi Supreme Court in June 2006 to develop a unified strategy to improve poor people's access to the civil courts. The Commission is tasked 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 civil legal services needs of the poor. The Access to Justice Commission works to address *civil* legal representation of the poor. It does not deal with indigent criminal defense issues.

A Speakers Bureau of the Access to Justice Commission is available to talk to civic and community groups. The Speakers Bureau was created to promote among Mississippi citizens an understanding of the growing need for civil legal services and how the Commission is working to reduce barriers to the justice system by addressing rules, procedures and policies that affect access to justice for poor Mississippians. The Speakers Bureau includes Access to Justice Co-Chairs Hinds County Chancery Judge Denise Owens and former Mississippi Bar President Rodger Wilder of Gulfport; Chancery Judge Deborah Gambrell of Hattiesburg; Chancery Judge Jacqueline Mask of Tupelo; Rep. David Baria of Bay St. Louis; University of Mississippi Medical Center Chief Community Health Officer Michael L. Jones; and ACLU Executive Director Jennifer Riley-Collins. To request a speaker, e-mail Tiffany Graves at tgraves@msbar.org, or call 601-960-9581.

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