

Chancery Courts in Clarke and Marion counties implement e-filing; Forrest, Lamar, Pearl River and Perry counties will soon go online

November 10, 2015

Chancery Courts in Clarke and Marion counties will begin voluntary electronic filing of court documents on Nov. 16, and will move to mandatory electronic filing on Dec. 14.

Electronic filing is expected to be available soon afterwards in Chancery Courts of Forrest, Lamar, Pearl River and Perry counties. Those four counties along with Marion County make up the Tenth Chancery District, which will be the first court district in the state to implement district-wide e-filing in one operation. While other districts have achieved complete coverage of e-filing, implementation has been spread out over several years, with individual counties opting into the Mississippi Electronic Courts system.

Chancery Judge Dawn Beam of Sumrall said, “We really are on a fast track to go to Forrest and Lamar counties, then on to Pearl River and Perry counties.” She expects all counties of the Tenth Chancery to be using electronic filing by March.

“We are about to take it to a new level,” said Mississippi Supreme Court Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr., who hopes to expand the Mississippi Electronic Courts system statewide.

Judge Beam said the district-wide use of e-filing will yield additional benefits. “This will allow the court to access any case in the five counties from any location,” she said. “The court can better manage cases. Attorneys will be able to file in any of the five counties from their offices and access court records. Citizens are better served when cases are managed and heard in a timely manner.”

Clarke County Chancery Court’s move to e-filing completes implementation of the system in the Twelfth Chancery District. Lauderdale County Chancery Court began using e-filing in February 2014.

Senior Chancery Judge Jerry Mason of Meridian said, “We are pleased that the Twelfth Chancery Court District will operate through the Mississippi Electronic Courts system. The addition of Clarke County to MEC will allow the chancery judges to review the documents filed in civil actions from either county and will allow us to be more efficient in the review of and the preparation for pending cases.”

With the addition of Clarke and Marion counties, a total of 36 trial courts use the MEC e-filing system. The MEC program, under the supervision of the Mississippi Supreme Court, is utilized in 24 counties.

Other e-filing trial courts include the Chancery Courts in DeSoto, Grenada, Holmes, Lauderdale, Leake, Lowndes, Montgomery, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Panola, Stone, Wayne, Webster, Yalobusha and Yazoo counties; Chancery and Circuit Courts of Clay and Tate counties; and all trial courts – Chancery, Circuit and County Courts – in Madison, Harrison, Hinds, Rankin and Warren counties. The Mississippi Supreme Court and Court of Appeals also utilize e-filing.

E-filing of court records 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 MEC system 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.

MEC will offer attorney training on Dec. 2 at 9:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. in Columbia at the Marion County Development Partnership, 412 Courthouse Square. Attorneys may earn three hours of continuing legal education credit. Online registration is at this link: http://courts.ms.gov/mec/mec_attorney_training_mailform.html.

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