

Jefferson Davis County Circuit Court to implement e-filing Dec. 7

November 24, 2015

Jefferson Davis County Circuit Court expects to begin voluntary electronic filing of court documents on Dec. 7, and plans to move to mandatory electronic filing on Jan. 4, 2016.

The entire 15th Circuit Court District is expected to implement e-filing for civil cases in 2016. Other counties in the district include Lamar, Lawrence, Marion and Pearl River. Lawrence County is next in line to begin circuit clerk training to prepare for electronic filing.

Chancery Courts in the Pine Belt also are working to implement e-filing. Marion County Chancery Court began voluntary electronic filing on Nov. 16, and will move to mandatory electronic filing on Dec. 14. Chancery Courts of Forrest, Lamar, Pearl River and Perry counties are expected to implement e-filing using the Mississippi Electronic Courts system by the end of March as the entire 10th Chancery District moves to electronic records, said MEC Director Lisa Counts.

The Mississippi Electronic Courts program, under the supervision of the Mississippi Supreme Court, provides free technology and training to counties. The only cost to local courts is computer hardware and Internet access.

Circuit Judge Prentiss G. Harrell of Hattiesburg has eagerly awaited the start of e-filing in the 15th Circuit District. "E-filing will be a tremendous benefit to the citizens of each county in the 15th District, to attorneys state-wide, and to all court personnel," he said.

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. Electronic access eliminates the need for attorneys and their clients to travel to the courthouse to obtain copies of documents. Judge Harrell said that electronic access will reduce the amount of time spent by clerk staff, court personnel and attorneys searching for, retrieving and copying paper documents. Digital files also will reduce county expenses for postage and paper.

Allowing people to obtain copies of records online has decreased the traffic at the counter for some court clerks. In Lauderdale County Chancery Court, which implemented e-filing in March 2014, "I would say it probably cut the work load in half," said Chief Deputy Clerk Tawanna Wright. "We do not have the foot traffic. Administrative assistants and secretaries and attorneys are not having to come in as often with every document." With less time spent pulling files and making copies, "we are more efficient and we are able to do more case management," Wright said.

With the addition of Jefferson Davis County Circuit Court, a total of 37 trial courts in 26 counties will use the MEC e-filing system.

Other e-filing trial courts include the Chancery Courts in Clarke, DeSoto, Grenada, Holmes, Lauderdale, Leake, Lowndes, Marion, 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.

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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