

Chancery Courts in Forrest and Lamar counties to begin e-filing

January 14, 2016

Chancery Courts in Forrest and Lamar counties will begin voluntary electronic filing of court documents on January 18, and e-filing will become mandatory on February 15.

The entire 10th Chancery Court District is expected to be using e-filing soon. Marion County Chancery Court began mandatory e-filing Dec. 14, 2015. Mississippi Electronic Courts staff are training Chancery Clerk office staff in Perry and Pearl River counties in anticipation of those offices implementing e-filing.

Chancellor Dawn Beam of Sumrall, who spearheaded the district-wide implementation of e-filing, said, "We are excited about the progress being made in our district. We are now on-line with MEC in Forrest, Lamar and Marion counties and our court administrators are using the new system to set cases and manage the court's docket. By February 15, the entire district will be on-line. I cannot say enough good things about the clerks and court administrators in our district. Change is never easy, but they have risen to the challenge. Ultimately, we will be able to manage our docket from anywhere, which is going to allow us to better serve our citizens."

While early e-filing implementation targeted a mix of metropolitan and rural areas and counties at the far ends of the state, MEC's emphasis has shifted to district-wide implementation. The 10th Chancery is the first to undertake district-wide implementation in one continuous operation. Judges and court staff benefit from the district-wide system by being able to better track cases and coordinate scheduling of court proceedings as well as being able to file and view documents from all counties in the district via the Internet.

Seven other districts already have district-wide e-filing, but those implementations were done one county at a time and spread out over time. District-wide e-filing is used in the 3rd, 5th, 11th, 12th and 20th Chancery Districts and in the 7th and 20th Circuit Districts.

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.

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. Digital files also will reduce county expenses for postage and paper.

A total of 39 other trial courts in 25 counties already use e-filing. Those jurisdictions include Chancery Courts in Clarke, DeSoto, Grenada, Holmes, Lauderdale, Leake, Lowndes, Marion, Montgomery, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Panola, Stone, Wayne, Webster, Yalobusha and Yazoo counties; Jefferson Davis County Circuit Court; Chancery and Circuit Courts in Clay and Tate counties; and the Chancery, Circuit and County Courts of Harrison, Hinds, Madison, Rankin and Warren counties.

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