

## Judge Alfonso, Judge Webster named to Drug Courts Advisory Committee

March 1, 2017

Harrison County Court Judge Margaret Alfonso of Gulfport and Circuit Judge Charles Webster of Clarksdale and have been appointed to the State Drug Courts Advisory Committee.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. made the appointments in an order filed Feb. 22.



Chief Justice Waller also reappointed Justice Robert P. Chamberlin of Hernando, Circuit Judge Robert Helfrich of Hattiesburg and Rankin County and Youth Court Judge Thomas H. Broome.

The appointees' terms run through December 2018. Members serve staggered terms.

Administrative Office of Courts Director Kevin Lackey of Ridgeland is chairman. Other members are Circuit Judge Michael Taylor of Brookhaven; Christy Gutherz of Jackson, deputy commissioner of Community Corrections for the Mississippi Department of Corrections; James Maccarone of Jackson, director of the Division of Youth Services of the Mississippi Department of Human Services; Sen. Sean Tindell of Gulfport; and Melody Winston of Madison, director of the Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Services of the Mississippi Department of Mental Health.

Judge Webster has served for 11 years as a circuit judge of the 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit District of Bolivar, Coahoma, Quitman and Tunica counties. He is former chair, vice-chair and secretary treasurer of the Conference of Circuit Judges and is a member of the Public Defender Task Force. He is a former public defender and city prosecutor, and former vice president of the Clarksdale Municipal School Board.

Judge Alfonso has been a Harrison County Court and Youth Court judge for six years. She previously served for 12 years as a chancellor of the 8<sup>th</sup> Chancery District of Hancock, Harrison and Stone counties. She previously served as a Harrison County Family Court prosecutor, Harrison County assistant prosecutor, assistant district attorney of Hancock, Harrison and Stone Counties, and assistant state's attorney for Cook County in Chicago. She is a member of the Access to Justice Commission and the Parent Representation Committee. She previously served on the Commission for the Study of Domestic Abuse Proceedings.

Judge Alfonso is a founding member of PACT, Professionals Advocating for Children Together. She received the 2010 Judicial Excellence Award.

The State Drug Courts Advisory Committee was established by the Mississippi Legislature in 2003 to recommend improvements to drug court policies and procedures. The Advisory Committee was also responsible for developing statewide evaluation plans and models for monitoring critical aspects of drug court operations.

Mississippi currently has 41 drug courts. There are 22 adult felony programs, with a drug court operating in every Circuit Court district in the state. There are 13 juvenile programs, three misdemeanor programs and three family courts. Drug courts may operate within Circuit Courts, Chancery Courts, Youth Courts, Justice Courts or Municipal Courts. About 3,670 people are enrolled in drug courts. The state's drug courts are estimated to produce \$46 million in annual savings by avoiding incarceration costs of those drug court participants.

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