HOUSE BILL NO. 918

AN ACT TO CREATE A SPECIAL FUND TO BE KNOWN AS THE MISSISSIPPI CIVIL LEGAL ASSISTANCE FUND AND TO DESIGNATE ORGANIZATIONS ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE FUNDS THEREFROM; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1. (1) There is hereby created in the State Treasury a special fund designated as the Civil Legal Assistance Fund. The funds shall be administered by the Supreme Court through the Administrative Office of Courts. The Administrative Office of Courts may also accept monies from any public or private source for deposit into the fund. Money remaining in the fund at the end of a fiscal year shall not lapse into the State General Fund, and any interest earned from the investment of monies in the fund shall be deposited to the credit of the funds. Money in the fund shall be utilized by the Administrative Office of Courts to provide legal representation for poor persons in civil matters as determined by the Supreme Court.

(2) All monies shall be allocated to only those organizations providing legal services to low income Mississippians, specifically those eligible to receive funds from the Legal Services Corporation, Washington, D.C.

(3) The monies appropriated shall be distributed to eligible legal services programs based on the percentage of poverty population within the program service area, consistent with the formula used by the Legal Services Corporation.

(4) Monies appropriated to the fund may be used to promote increased participation by the private bar in the delivery of
legal services to the indigent through the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project.

(5) Recipients of funds shall have the following duties:

(a) To develop, operate, and administer programs within their respective service areas that provide free legal services to indigent clients involved in civil matters;

(b) To report annually to the Supreme Court, through the Administrative Office of Courts, on its activities, including providing a copy of its annual audit that accounts for the use of the funds; and

(c) To refund annually all unused or uncommitted funds.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2002.