

By: Representative Watson

To: Judiciary B;
Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 899

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 9-21-43, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO
2 REQUIRE EACH CIRCUIT AND CHANCERY COURT TO REMIT FIFTEEN DOLLARS
3 OF ANY MONIES IT COLLECTS FROM CRIMINAL AND CIVIL ACTIONS TO THE
4 CIVIL LEGAL ASSISTANCE FUND; TO REQUIRE MONIES SO REMITTED TO THE
5 CIVIL LEGAL ASSISTANCE FUND TO BE ALLOCATED TO THE MISSISSIPPI
6 CENTER FOR LEGAL SERVICES; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

8 **SECTION 1.** Section 9-21-43, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
9 amended as follows:

10 9-21-43. (1) There is hereby created in the State Treasury
11 a special fund designated as the Civil Legal Assistance Fund.
12 The * * * fund shall be administered by the Supreme Court through
13 the Administrative Office of Courts. The Administrative Office of
14 Courts may also accept monies from any public or private source
15 for deposit into the fund. Money remaining in the fund at the end
16 of a fiscal year shall not lapse into the State General Fund, and
17 any interest earned from the investment of monies in the fund
18 shall be deposited to the credit of the * * * fund.

19 (2) All monies shall be allocated to only those
20 organizations providing legal services to low income



21 Mississippians. Furthermore, no monies from this fund shall be
22 expended to provide legal services in matters currently prohibited
23 by the Legal Services Corporation, Washington, D.C., and no funds
24 shall be expended on persons who are not financially eligible to
25 receive legal services as directed by the Legal Services
26 Corporation, Washington, D.C.

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

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

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

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

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

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

44 (6) Each circuit and chancery court shall remit Fifteen
45 Dollars (\$15.00) of any monies the court collects from a criminal



46 or civil action to the Civil Legal Assistance Fund to be allocated
47 to the Mississippi Center for Legal Services.

48 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
49 and after July 1, 2023.

