



SUPREME COURT OF GEORGIA

Atlanta May 4, 2005

The Honorable Supreme Court met pursuant to adjournment.
The following order was passed:

In recognition of the need for the development, coordination and maintenance of policy initiatives to expand access to, and enhance the quality of, Georgia's justice system in order to assure equal justice for all of Georgia's citizens, the court hereby creates:

The Equal Justice Commission

This new Commission will serve as a vehicle for coordinating and assisting in collaboration between two entities, one existing and one new, which will each address a distinct set of issues: The Committee on Access and Fairness in the Courts and the Committee on Civil Justice.

The Committee on Access and Fairness in the Courts will continue the work of many years done by the Commission of the same name. Its mandate, priorities and structure, will remain the same, and its role in serving as a vehicle for addressing the serious court-based issues of race, ethnic and gender bias; domestic violence; the need for interpreters and the physical access issues of the disabled as well as other issues of bias, prejudice and discrimination will continue with the support of the new Equal Justice Commission.

The Committee on Civil Justice will focus on access to justice issues for the poor and unrepresented citizens of Georgia. Its mission will be to develop, coordinate and support policy initiatives to expand access to, and enhance the quality of, Georgia's civil justice system, assuring equal justice for all. The Committee will build upon the work begun by the Access to Justice Committee of the State Bar.

The Equal Justice Commission will be Chaired by the Chief Justice, and made up of the Presiding Justice and the Chairs of the two designated Committees, or their designees, and the Director of Bar Admissions for the Supreme Court. The Court may appoint additional members, including representation of the State Bar of Georgia. The Commission will report back to this Court no less than annually about the state of equal justice in Georgia, and may make additional recommendations to this Court for further strengthening of the civil justice system in the State.

The Committee on Access and Fairness in the courts will continue with its current structure and members. The membership of the Committee on Civil Justice will be appointed by the Court by June 30, 2005. Staffing for both these efforts will be provided as necessary.

Committee on Civil Justice

This Committee will be appointed by the Supreme Court. The charge of the Committee will be to work, under the auspices of the Equal Justice Commission, to attain the following objectives, including but not limited to:

- a) Assessing the unmet civil legal needs of Georgians who cannot obtain equal justice under law because of income, language, institutionalization or other factors.
- b) Coordinating civil access to justice, by fostering the development of a statewide integrated civil legal services delivery system, and by encouraging the design and implementation of new programs to expand access to justice opportunities.
- c) Promoting widespread understanding of the importance of equal justice and of the problems many Georgians face in gaining effective access to our civil justice system.
- d) Encouraging lawyers and judges to take a leadership role in expanding access to justice.
- e) Coordinate and collaborate with the Committee on Access and Fairness in the Courts, making the civil justice system more responsive to persons who suffer disparate treatment or face economic, cultural or other challenges which make access to civil justice more difficult.
- f) Providing information and other support to help the legislature, courts, and other agencies and organizations improve access to justice in Georgia.
- g) Protecting current levels of financial support for equal justice initiatives, working to develop stable, long-term funding and other resources to support access to justice work, and encouraging wise and efficient use of all available resources.
- h) Giving input on existing and proposed laws, rules and regulations that may increase or reduce meaningful access to justice in Georgia.

In reaching its objectives, the Committee should be cognizant of the recommendations made by the State Bar of Georgia Access to Justice Committee and its equal justice actions groups, and should adopt and use those recommendations where it deems them appropriate.

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA
Clerk's Office, Atlanta

I hereby certify that the above is a true extract from
the minutes of the Supreme Court of Georgia
Witness my signature and the seal of said court hereto
affixed the day and year last above written.

Clerk