



Message from President Amanda Tollison Regarding the COVID-19 Situation

The Mississippi Bar continues to carefully monitor the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) situation by reviewing advisories issued by the [Mississippi Department of Health](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control](#). As you know, the [World Health Organization](#) has now declared the virus as a pandemic, and the President has declared a national emergency. Following the reports from the MSDH of multiple presumptive positive cases of COVID-19 in Mississippi, Governor Tate Reeves declared a [state of emergency](#). This letter is intended to keep our members informed on how this will likely affect you and your practice.

As professionals and community leaders, I would encourage all members of The Mississippi Bar to stay informed of the developing COVID-19 situation. The CDC's page on ["Preventing COVID-19 Spread in Communities"](#) is especially helpful as members of the Bar determine what precautionary measures they may need to implement. If you or your employees have traveled over spring break or recently, the CDC also has created a [webpage](#) specifically for travelers that provides helpful information and measures to implement. Additionally, the Mississippi Department of Health updates its [webpage](#) on COVID-19, including prevention and preparedness recommendations regularly, and has established a COVID-19 hotline: 877-978-6453, accessible on Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. I recommend that every member consult the MSDH website regularly to stay abreast of this evolving situation.

On March 13, the Mississippi Supreme Court issued an [Emergency Administrative Order](#) related to COVID-19, directing compliance with its guidelines to minimize public health risks from coronavirus, and then issued [Emergency Administrative Order-2](#) on March 15. The United States District Court for the Northern District issued a [Standing Order](#) and the United States District Court for the Southern District issued a [Special Order](#). All of these orders directly affect matters pending before them. Please review them promptly.

As employers and employees, take steps to protect yourself, your family, and your staff from contracting the disease and to prevent the spread of this disease in your communities. Some Mississippi lawyers and law firms have begun utilizing remote work capabilities, expanding telework options, and implementing social distancing protocols to ensure the health and safety of employees, clients and visitors. To the extent that you are able and have not already done so, I urge you to explore these options that would limit person-to-person (within 6 feet) contact which according to experts increases the risk of exposure and infection and the spread of COVID-19.

There are applications available in the virtual marketplace to download on your desktop or phone that would permit you to participate in meetings by videoconference. The Bar offers some benefits free or at a discount to its members that could assist in enabling lawyers and their staff to work remotely, such as:

- [Ruby](#) - live, virtual receptionists (8% lifetime discount with promotional code);
- [Identillect Technologies](#) - secure communication methods (e.g., email encryption) that plug directly into your existing email platform, including Gmail, Outlook, Office 365, Hotmail, etc. (Annual 20% discount with promotional code);
- [LawPay](#) - online platform for client billing and receiving payments (current promo of \$100 credit towards fees);
- [Clio](#) - cloud-based practice management system (10% lifetime discount);
- [MyCase](#) - cloud-based legal practice management solution (10% lifetime discount on monthly plans);
- [ZolaSuite](#) - cloud-based legal practice management solution (15% lifetime discount for up to 5 users using a promotional code);
- [Fastcase](#) - Free legal research database accessible through Bar's website; and
- [FormsPass](#) - legal forms library (available by subscription).

In light of the recommendations from federal and state health officials to maintain social distancing as much as practical, to avoid non-essential business travel, and to suspend gatherings of over 50 people for eight weeks, all of which are intended to protect the public health and safety, The Mississippi Bar has postponed the following scheduled events:

- March 19 Session - Leadership Forum - Postponed. Location: Mississippi Supreme Court and State Capitol Buildings
- March 27 CLE - Intellectual Property, Entertainment & Sports Law Section's "Challenges and Hot Topics in IP and Sports Law" CLE - Postponed. Location: Mississippi State University
- April 23 Session - Leadership Forum - Postponed. Location: Mississippi Bar Center

In accordance with the guidelines stated above, the Bar has cancelled the following scheduled events:

- April 2 - Northern Regional Bar Meeting/CLE on the Road Seminar in Columbus. (Registrants are receiving refunds.)
- April 3 - Central Regional Bar Meeting/CLE on the Road Seminar in Meridian. (Registrants are receiving refunds.)
- May 15- Southern Regional Bar Meeting/CLE on the Road Seminar in Biloxi. (Registrants are receiving refunds.)

Furthermore, to ensure the health and safety of our members and Bar staff, The Mississippi Bar has taken the following precautionary steps:

- All upcoming Bar Committee Meetings and the Young Lawyers Division Board Meeting for the month of March will proceed as videoconference meetings.
- We are encouraging all Committees and Sections to meet by teleconference or videoconference for upcoming meetings.
- Enhanced disinfection of common areas in the Bar Center is occurring.
- Visitors are not allowed in the Bar Center if they fall into one of the three categories: (1) Those who have been, within the past 14 days, in countries for which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have issued a level 2 or level 3 Travel Health Notice; (2) Those who have travelled internationally within the past 14 days and during that period have experienced symptoms associated with COVID-

19, which include fever, cough, and shortness of breath; or (3) Those who have been exposed to COVID-19 or have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and are not yet cleared as non-contagious by state or local public health authorities.

- We are evaluating all meetings planned at the Bar Center. If you or your group has an upcoming event planned in a conference room or board room, we may ask you to reschedule or postpone.
- To ensure the continuity of core services, we are preparing for Bar staff to provide core services by telework if necessary. Also, non-essential business travel by Bar staff is not allowed.

We will be monitoring the situation to make a determination concerning operations, meetings and events scheduled for later in May in order to ensure the health and safety of our Members and staff. We will notify Members of any disruptions to events or operations by posting to our website and social media accounts as well as emailing enrolled participants.

Please check our [Coronavirus Safety Measures](#) page for updates.

Even during these uncertain times, our organizational values direct how The Mississippi Bar will conduct itself as it continues to work to achieve its goals and fulfill its mission. We are striving to stay true to our vision to be an invaluable partner in your practice and a trusted community leader that ensures the justice system is evolving to meet the needs of all Mississippi residents. Please reach out to me directly or to the Bar staff if we can be of assistance to you.

Sincerely,



Amanda Tollison
President
The Mississippi Bar

Resources

Centers for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>

Mississippi State Department of Health: https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/14,0,420.html

The Mississippi Bar: <https://www.msbar.org/for-members/coronavirus-safety-measures/>

World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/>