



**For immediate release**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Law School Adopts Hurricane Ravaged Court in Joint Effort to Create a National Model**

Mississippi's Gulfport Municipal Court and the Center for Legal and Court Technology (CLCT) jointly announced today a unique cooperative agreement under which CLCT will assist the Municipal Court in its ongoing effort to recover from the effects of Hurricane Katrina and to become a national model for municipal courts.

The Gulfport Municipal Court is the City of Gulfport's trial court of first instance for domestic violence cases, traffic, and a wide variety of other offenses. The court has the largest caseload in Mississippi. Originally housed in trailers after Hurricane Katrina destroyed its courthouse, the court is now located in a converted elementary school. The court's judges and other staff are now currently working to design a new building which will house both the court and the Gulfport Police Department's headquarters.

CLCT (previously known as the Courtroom 21 Project) is a joint initiative of William & Mary Law School and the National Center for State Courts. The world center for courtroom and related technology, CLCT includes in William & Mary Law School's McGlothlin Courtroom the world's most technologically advanced trial and appellate courtroom. In addition to its ambitious research agenda, CLCT designs courtrooms and hearing rooms throughout the nation. It has been responsible for upgrading and designing the Guantanamo Bay courtrooms in which the Department of Defense's Office of Military Commissions will try those detainees charged with violating the law of war, including those charged with the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks.

Commenting on the partnership, Odell Thompson, Gulfport Municipal Court Administrator, said "This new partnership with CLCT will provide the opportunity for our ultimate goal to come to fruition and that goal is to make Gulfport Municipal Court the centerpiece for justice on the Gulf Coast." Fred Lederer, Chancellor Professor of Law and Director of the Center for Legal and Court Technology, observes, "Our hearts go out to all those who are still suffering from the natural disasters that hit our coast. This is our chance to try to help, and it is both an honor and pleasure to work with the enthusiastic staff of Gulfport Municipal Court."

CLCT is providing its assistance on a pro bono basis as a public service. CLCT is assisting in review of the courthouse design, proposing courtroom designs, reviewing the court's processes, making recommendations for adoption of state-of-the-art technology, and providing other support as appropriate. The parties believe that this is likely the first time that a court is receiving this degree of support from a law school. The court and CLCT are working together to provide a state and national municipal court model.