

For Immediate Release
December 3, 2002

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Governor Musgrove Signs Civil Justice Reforms Into Law

(Jackson, MS) – Governor Ronnie Musgrove signed civil justice reform into law today in a ceremony at the State Capitol. House Bill 19 was passed by the Legislature on November 26.

“There were a lot of people who didn’t think Mississippi could raise teacher pay or land one of the top economic development projects in the nation with the Nissan plant, but we did it,” Musgrove said. “There were also a lot of people who didn’t think civil justice reform could, or would, ever be signed into law by a Mississippi governor.”

Musgrove announced in May 2002 he would call a special session to address reforms.

“The call to the Legislature was clear. My position on the need for fair and balanced reform was also clear,” said Musgrove. “I started this special session with a call for serious debate on civil justice reform, and a promise to sign a bill that would accomplish meaningful reforms. Today, I’m proud to stay true to that promise.”

Musgrove called a special session for September 5 to address medical malpractice reform, and expanded the call to general civil justice reform on October 8.

Reforms in the legislation signed today by Musgrove include the following:

- Limits lawsuits to the county where defendant resides, where the alleged act occurred or where event that caused injury occurred;
- Limits award of punitive damages based on net worth of the defendant;
- Provides protection for “innocent seller;”
- Prohibits advertising by attorneys not licensed in Mississippi;
- Prohibits cities and counties from filing lawsuits against gun or ammunition manufacturers, distributors or dealers;
- Provides for a \$1,000 assessment for filing a frivolous claim;
- Gives immunity to property owners for failing to prevent criminal acts of a third party unless the owner knew or should have known the risk of criminal conduct;
- Limits the joining of out-of-state plaintiffs in pending lawsuits.

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