

SLEDGE TAKES CITY COURT TO NEXT LEVEL

Judge C. Britain Sledge, III has made significant changes to the operations of the City Court of Hammond. Since his investiture as the 10th judge of the City Court of Hammond on June 1, 2022, the court continues to progress and be recognized as the most technologically advanced and user-friendly court in the state. Judge Sledge has focused his energy on maintaining the court's excellence of operations while always striving to enhance the court's efficiency and access to justice for the citizens of the Seventh Ward.

During his first seven months on the bench, Judge Sledge focused on meeting with all of the principals of 7th Ward schools and shared his vision for juvenile program services and listened to their thoughts, ideas, as well as their prioritized needs. Judge Sledge has taken input from the principals and applied changes in the truancy program to accommodate the specific needs of our area schools. He learned that some principals found that some parents are not cooperative due to fear of being arrested on outstanding warrants, thus he initiated an amnesty program to insure that these students can comply with the truancy program without their parents being arrested. The City Court plays a vital role in the Tangipahoa Parish School System's truancy program and provides staff support to address truancy issues. Judge Sledge and his Juvenile Services Division view truancy as a symptom of more serious family and student issues. The Juvenile Services Division and Families in Need of Services play a vital role in addressing educational and behavioral issues before they rise to the level of a juvenile becoming delinquent.

Judge Sledge also initiated a Code Enforcement Court docket for the City Court. After communicating with city and parish officials, he developed a procedure for processing those cases and opened the court as a venue to have the citations for violations of city and parish ordinances heard.

Small claims is an area that Judge Sledge recognized as needing expansion. The Small Claims Division now accepts all filings that fall within the subject matter jurisdiction of the court that are less than \$5,000.00. Another important change to small claims is that Judge Sledge has provided forms on the court's website for the public's convenience. Claimants can access small claims forms at www.citycourt.org.

The court also provides forms online for the public's use in filing expungements of misdemeanor charges. The expungement process is uniform throughout the state and the forms are now easily attainable at www.citycourt.org.

Court dates have also been expanded since Judge Sledge took the bench. "It is important to me that access to justice is attainable to all." said Sledge. As such, he has added additional weekly court dates to insure that all cases are heard in a timely fashion.