



Lynn Fitch
ATTORNEY GENERAL
OPINIONS AND POLICY

September 2, 2026

The Honorable Garry Turner
Justice Court Judge, Chickasaw County, District 1
1 Pinson Square
Houston, Mississippi 38851

Re: Justice Court Judicial Lines

Dear Judge Turner:

The Office of the Attorney General has received your request for an official opinion.

Background

According to your request, you are seeking clarification of the official district line(s) within the Chickasaw County Justice Court to clarify the proper court that governs crimes committed in each judicial district. You are also seeking to understand the civil jurisdictional line(s) to clarify whether constables are required to operate strictly within their respective elected line(s) or if their authority extends into the other judicial district. Finally, you state that it is unclear whether District One and District Two are required to maintain separate reports, funds, and accounts for monies collected within their respective jurisdictions.

Questions Presented

1. Are judicial district lines or election district lines used to distinguish District One and District Two for civil and criminal jurisdiction in Chickasaw County Justice Court?
2. For legal, clerical, and administrative purposes, are District One and District Two recognized as separate entities, or should they function collectively?

Brief Response

1. Chickasaw County's judicial district lines distinguish District One and District Two for civil and criminal jurisdiction in justice court.

2. Even in counties with multiple districts, justice court judges have countywide jurisdiction. But in regard to venue, criminal defendants must be tried in the judicial district where the crime occurred. State law does not directly address the clerical and administrative portion of your question. We recommend contacting the Administrative Office of Courts (“AOC”) for additional guidance on justice court reporting.

Applicable Law and Discussion

To begin, Mississippi Code Annotated Section 7-5-25 authorizes this office to opine upon prospective matters of state law relating to the requestor’s office only. We are unable to opine upon the duties of offices that are not the requestor’s; determinations of fact; county ordinances, regulations, or other such documents.

We first note that, while possible, election districts and judicial districts for justice courts do not necessarily coincide.¹ Regarding election districts, the Mississippi Supreme Court has stated that “[t]here is no public act establishing the boundaries of a supervisor’s district, from which justices of the peace are elected.” *Elzey v. State*, 70 So. 579, 579 (Miss. 1916); *see also Clark v. State*, 92 So. 2d 452, 453 (Miss. 1957). Rather, “[t]he districts of a county are determined by order of the board of supervisors of the county, and by such order may be and sometimes are changed.” *Elzey*, 70 So. at 579; *see also* Miss. Code Ann. § 23-15-283(1), (3) (“The board of supervisors shall have power to alter the boundaries of the supervisors districts Copies of any boundary line changes within the county shall be maintained in the office of the circuit clerk and made available for public inspection.”). A change in the boundary lines of a supervisor’s district, from which justice court judges are elected, does not alter the boundary lines of a county’s judicial districts. It is the judicial district lines that distinguish District One and District Two for civil and criminal jurisdiction in Chickasaw County justice court.

This said, justice court judges themselves have countywide jurisdiction.² *See* Miss. Code Ann. §§ 11-9-101(1) (civil); 99-33-1 (criminal); *see also* MS AG Op., *Pugh* at *1 (Mar. 21, 1984) (“[A] justice court judge has jurisdiction over a criminal offense which was committed in the county, even though the offense may have been committed in another judicial district.”). Stated differently, a justice court judge may preside over matters in either judicial district of its county—in Chickasaw County’s case, Houston or Okolona— regardless of which district the judge was

¹ This is made clear by Section 9-11-2(2), which provides:

(2) The board of supervisors shall establish single member election districts in the county for the nonpartisan election of each of the justice court judges authorized and required to be elected for the county under the provisions of subsection (1) of this section, and one (1) justice court judge shall be elected for each district by the electors of each district. In any county authorized and required under the provisions of subsection (1)(a) of this section to provide for the election of two (2) justice court judges for the county in which there are two (2) judicial districts, the smaller of such judicial districts, according to population based upon the latest federal decennial census, shall comprise or shall be wholly encompassed within one (1) of the election districts.

² Regarding your inquiry as to constables in relation to civil jurisdiction, Section 7-5-25 allows us to issue opinions relating to the respective requestor’s office only. For informational purposes, please see MS AG Op., *White* at *1 (May 26, 2000) (providing “a constable has jurisdiction county wide and may serve process anywhere in the county”).

elected from. However, “a defendant in a criminal matter must be tried only in the judicial district in which the crime is alleged to have occurred.” MS AG Op., *Ross* at *1 (Apr. 16, 1991); *see also* MS AG Op., *Ruffin* at *1 (Feb. 22, 2008); *Clark*, 92 So. 2d at 453. We highlight Section 99-33-2(1)’s requirement that, as far as practicable, criminal cases be assigned to “justice court judges in the county on a rotating basis to ensure equal distribution.” *Id.*; *see also* MS AG Op., *Ruffin* at *1 (“In counties with two judicial districts, the judges should be rotated between cases in both districts of the county.”).

Finally, state law does not directly address whether District One and District Two are recognized as separate entities for clerical and administrative purposes. This said, Section 9-1-46 sets forth the requirements for semiannual reports that justice courts must submit to the AOC. And pursuant to Section 9-1-46(2), AOC “shall be empowered to establish a uniform reporting format for all court clerks.” Accordingly, we recommend contacting AOC for further guidance on this question.

If this office may be of any further assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

LYNN FITCH, ATTORNEY GENERAL

By: /s/ *Maggie Kate Bobo*

Maggie Kate Bobo
Special Assistant Attorney General

OFFICIAL OPINION