

Mississippi Innocence Project Director Tapped to Lead State Task Force

Contributed by Jennifer Farish
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Tucker Carrington

OXFORD, Miss. - The director of the Mississippi Innocence Project housed at the University of Mississippi School of Law has been selected to head a state task force studying issues surrounding DNA testing.

Tucker Carrington, MIP director, came to UM from Georgetown Law School in fall 2007 to lead the newly established state Innocence Project. He also served as a public defender while in Washington, D.C.

Since joining UM, Carrington has been involved in two high-profile exonerations in the state, and it was through those cases that Carrington and members of the Innocence Project in New York began to push for legislative reform in Mississippi.

This past legislative session, lawmakers passed a bill creating a task force to look at statewide standards for DNA testing, preservation and collection, as well as training for law enforcement officers who handle DNA evidence. The 23-member task force selected Carrington as the chairman during its first meeting Monday (Aug. 11).

"Mississippi still has no DNA legislation - neither for collection, preservation nor access to testing," Carrington said Tuesday. "It remains one of only seven states with none. Our goal is to change that by studying the legislative options open to us and choosing the best tailored legislation that we can produce."

Carrington said the task force also will spend a good deal of time working with people inside and outside the state to figure out the practical issues of implementing the legislation as well as examining the possibility of outside funding.

"There is some \$34 million in federal funds available to states for this; Mississippi should take advantage of the offering," he added.

The task force is expected to present a report to state lawmakers by Dec. 1 and will look at data from other states that have adopted DNA laws to determine what will work in Mississippi.

The MIP was created in fall 2007 with funding from UM law alumnus and author John Grisham and attorney Wilbur Colom of Columbus. In fall 2007, Grisham joined fellow author Scott Turow at a dinner to raise operating funds for the state organization.

The MIP includes a clinical program for UM law students and is investigating more than 80 cases around the state. MIP is not officially tied to the national organization.

[Mississippi Innocence Project Web site](#)

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