

Wednesday, May 26, 2010

COMMISSION CALLS FOR ADEQUATE DEFENSE COUNSEL

If criminal defendants are not being provided adequate counsel, their civil rights are being violated, the Civil Rights Commission said in a resolution adopted Monday evening.

The state's system of providing attorneys for indigent defendants has come under fire in recent months, and the commission unanimously found that the state needs to ensure those defendants have proper representation.

"The commission was convinced that the costs of not providing effective counsel are indeed a civil rights concern," said Commission Chair Matthew Wesaw. "To an individual, the human impact, the human cost of ineffective counsel can be devastating. The state, however, pays the costs to incarcerate thousands of individuals who may have been determined innocent, or received a lesser sentence had the system worked the way it should."