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To: governor@governor.state.ms.us  
From: Deborah Lemmons <dlemmons@olemiss.edu>  
Subject: Rainy Day Fund For State Salary Increases  
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Governor Musgrove:

I am a state employee. I work at Ole Miss. I think one of the most pressing issues facing the state today is the lack of funds to give the public university employees a cost of living raise. Most support staff here makes an average of \$13-14,000 annually and because of the state's current "flat budget" we are told we may not get raises for up to 4 years!

The public school teachers got raises--and they deserved--but we, as STAFF members of a public university do not get anything. I'm not talking about faculty but I'm not excluding faculty.

I was informed by my district representative yesterday (here in Oxford) that there is a \$300 million "rainy day fund" that is not being touched. My rep told our Staff Council that he and our senator fought to get some of that money used to give us increases but there were "two or three" people of the "powers that be" who absolutely refused to touch the money.

It IS our money. It IS tax money. This budget situation IS a crisis for the poverty level state employees who have to pay rent and buy groceries. It IS a rainy day for those people who have state insurance on their children and now have to pay a monthly increase on that as well as feed, clothe, school, and nurture those children.

We already make peanuts. There is an insurance increase; yet we have to figure out--on our own--how to work that extra money into our personal budgets with nothing extra to work with. People working on this and other campuses can barely afford to insure their families without the increase, how are they expected to find MORE money with NO MORE money coming in? It is true that we have gotten raises for four years. However, it is also true that we still make very low salaries and cannot afford to go without a cost of living increase--much less afford it as prices and TAXES steadily go up for the next 2 or 4 years to come!

Rainy day money is worthless if it's not used for what it is set aside for. What is the legislature waiting for? This is a rainy day--ask any state employee making \$11,000 a year. Ask one making \$16,000! Can you honestly say that YOU could live on that salary given the state's current economic expenses and outrageous tax deductions?

We want to use some of that "rainy day fund" for our rainy day. It is ours. You may be entrusted with it, but you do not own it. WE DO. We want salary increases and this \$275-300 million "rainy day fund" is currently the most feasible way to obtain them. I hope this issue is considered next time you meet with the legislature and Lt. Governor.

Thank you for your attention.  
Deborah Lemmons

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