

MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

FRIDAY FACTS

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HIGHLIGHTS OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION 2003

During this legislative session my plans are to spend a great deal of time meeting with the members of the Legislature and explain to them how vital support is to our economic development efforts. In a downsizing economy, it is more important than ever to support economic development and the creation of high paying jobs for Mississippians. Dollars spent for economic development are dollars that offer a high return on investment.

I would like to briefly share with you the highlights of our proposed legislation for this session:

- ✓ **Business Incubation Centers** - Recommend a \$2 million increase authorization to re-fund this program. Growing our own is vital and we need to do more in this area.
- ✓ **Jobs Tax Credit** - Allow jobs tax credit for companies that create twenty new jobs in a given twelve-month's period, regardless of when they are created within that twelve month period.
- ✓ **Development Infrastructure Program** - Add \$1.5 million to MDA authority for infrastructure grants.
- ✓ **Emerging Crops Fund Legislation Minority Loan Program** - This program's sunset would take place on or after July 1, 2003. We are requesting an extension of the repealer to July 1, 2005.
- ✓ **Minority Business Enterprise Loan Program** - Change percentages from (60%) to (51%) to be consistent with percentage in the State of Mississippi MBE/WBE Certification Program as well as Federal Guidelines in the U.S. Small Business Act.
- ✓ **Minority Business Enterprise Act** - Delete section referencing size of business or length of time in business.
- ✓ **Certification Program Certifies Designation as Minority Business Enterprise and Women Business Enterprises** - Certification Program changes certification designation as Small Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, so that Certification designations will be consistent with those used by the Federal Regulations and guidelines.
- ✓ **Capital Improvements Revolving Loan (CAP)** - Set the interest rate for all taxable and tax-exempt projects at not more than 1% below the Federal Discount Rate.

Also regarding CAP loans - currently recreation and athletic facilities are not considered eligible to receive CAP funding.

The proposed legislation is written so as to restrict these projects to a maximum of \$250,000 per project.

As you can see, we have our work cut out for us this year. It's a busy time - - but a very exciting time for MDA.

As you visit with members of the legislature, other members of the business community, and your friends, and acquaintances I hope you'll talk about the ideas we are proposing for this session.

In the coming weeks, I hope you'll talk about the importance of economic development to the future of our families, our businesses and our state.

Robert J. Rohrlack, Jr., CED
Executive Director, Mississippi Development Authority

PRIORITIES FOR ADVANCING MISSISSIPPI THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION UNVEILED AT LEADERSHIP SUMMIT FACILITATED BY AGB CENTER

Governor Ronnie Musgrove and the steering committee for the Mississippi Leadership Summit on Higher Education unveiled *Building Opportunity in Mississippi Through Higher Education*, a report of priorities for advancing Mississippi through its colleges and universities on Monday, January 7, 2002.

As the first state selected by the Washington, D.C.-based Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges' Center for Public Higher Education Trusteeship and Governance (AGB) to host a summit on higher education, Mississippi is bringing together government, business, and education leaders to provide a cooperative framework for education, economic and social progress.

The steering committee's report introduces a shared vision for Mississippi's future and outlines six major priorities that will help advance the state's competitiveness and its citizens' quality of life. The priorities include initiatives that Mississippi education – its public and private two-year and four-year colleges and universities, and in several places, its public school system – can undertake collaboratively with the state and the private sector to achieve this shared vision.

The 40-member steering committee, co-chaired by Governor Musgrove and Aubrey Patterson of Tupelo, chairman and chief executive officer of BancorpSouth, Inc., includes a broad cross section of Mississippi education, business and community leaders. They have served on the project since May 2001.

"Mississippians can take great pride in the steering committee's work and their vision for a future where our citizens and their fellow Americans share a view of Mississippi as the state of promise and opportunity," said Musgrove. "It will be a great day for education in Mississippi when partners and advocates collaborate in support of our vision for a Mississippi that markets and capitalizes on its marvelous assets of strategic location, social civility, educational and cultural institutions, quality of life, climate and a willing workforce."

The report's six major priorities recommend that Mississippi colleges and universities work together with all Mississippians to:

- Raise the educational aspirations of our citizens

- Prepare all of our children to learn by the time they begin school
- Boost the quality of teaching and learning in our elementary and secondary schools
- Increase college and university graduation rates
- Dramatically expand adult lifelong learning, worker training and professional development
- Increase the level of activity in university research and development

"With the implementation of *Building Opportunity in Mississippi Through Higher Education* we have the opportunity to improve the educational attainment of all Mississippians and the economic situation of individuals and communities across the state," Musgrove said. "It is within our control to build a workforce in Mississippi that will help us retain current industries and attract new ones. We have to be more efficient than ever in how we focus our resources if we want this agenda to move forward."

"Implementing our agenda will demand strong leadership, new partnerships and new ways of doing business," said Aubrey Patterson, steering committee co-chairman. "Based on the committee's involvement, we are confident that public/private partnerships will be forged across the state in support of *Building Opportunity in Mississippi Through Higher Education*."

For more information, visit www.mississippi.gov or www.centerforgovernance.net.

MINORITY BUSINESS BREAKFAST PLANNED FOR CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

On Thursday, January 17, the Minority Business Enterprise Division (MBED) of the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) will co-sponsor a Business Breakfast.

The breakfast, to be held at Frank's World Famous Biscuits in downtown Jackson, will target minority- and woman-owned business enterprises involved in the construction industry.

Special guests and speakers will include: Gennie Lacy Jones, Division Director, MBED; State Senator John Horhn; and State Representative Tom Wallace.

This networking opportunity is also co-sponsored by Morris Service Group, Inc.

For more information, contact MBED at 601-359-3448.

RUTTERREX OPENS TYLERTOWN PLANT

In a historic move, RutterRex, Inc., a leading manufacturer of specialty clothing and uniforms, will open a domestic apparel plant in Tylertown to produce pants for the military and the United States Postal Service. The official plant opening and ribbon cutting ceremony were held last week.

"We are delighted to be able to open a new apparel manufacturing facility in the United States," said Jack Denis, Jr., President of RutterRex. "It is a vote of confidence in the high quality of American labor, and in the pro-business climate which exists in the state of Mississippi."

The new plant will occupy 35,000 square feet and employ close to 200 workers. It will produce a range of men's and women's dress slacks for the Marine Corps and the Navy, and will be outfitted with state-of-the-art apparel manufacturing technology.

"Our business is growing by leaps and bounds," said Denis. "In the two months since opening this facility we have become the first or second largest employer in Walthall County. We simply need to expand our production to keep up with orders, which are running 30 percent ahead of last year."

"RutterRex, which was founded 72 years ago, also operates a shirt manufacturing plant in Columbia, Mississippi, employing an additional 300 workers. The company produces clothing for virtually all branches of the military as well as postal workers and other government employees, together with a complete collection of uniforms and work wear.

"Contrary to the general economy, our business has been strong," Denis stated. "The military needs to constantly replenish its clothing inventories for its personnel and new recruits. And there are only a handful of companies – all of them manufacturing here in the U.S. – who can meet the very demanding specifications for armed forces procurement."

The Mississippi Development Authority offered the company significant incentives – including tax abatements and a grant to cover investment in machinery and technology. "There is no question that Mississippi made our decision of where to locate an easy one. In fact, we found it impossible to refuse their generous assistance," Denis added.

BAY SAINT LOUIS RECOGNIZED BY USA TODAY

USA Today names Bay Saint Louis as one of the Top 10 among 100 Best Small Art Towns in America. "Nearly two dozen art and fine-crafts galleries line the streets of Old Town," the article reads, "where you'll find bed and breakfast inns, cafés dishing up fresh Gulf seafood and lots of Southern charm."

Beth Carriere of the Hancock County Tourism Development Bureau expresses, "It's a wonderful opportunity for us. The story will reach far more people than we could ever afford to reach (with advertising)."

In addition to its wonderful artistic offerings, Bay Saint Louis will host BayArts 2002, a series of artist-tutored workshops, from March 7 – 10. The workshops will be conducted by visual artists and art educators who have chosen to call Bay Saint Louis home. Also slated for this year is a National Public Radio-inspired series of workshops, Sound & Spirit, featuring master musicians and dancers from around the country.

For more information about artists and art programs in the Bay St. Louis area, contact the city's Department of Cultural Affairs at 228-463-7120 or the Hancock Tourism Development Bureau at 228-463-9222.

MINORITY BUSINESS ENTERPRISE DIVISION SPONSORS MONTHLY WORKSHOPS

The Minority Business Enterprise Division (MBED) of the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) sponsors various workshops and training sessions throughout the year. Two workshops in particular are held each month and provide invaluable opportunities for existing and minority business leaders to learn more about the programs and services offered by MBED.

The Certification Workshop will be held on the third Monday of each month beginning February 18. The workshop will cover the eligibility requirements for MBED's certification program and detail the application and certification review processes. A review of the documentation checklist will also be provided during the session.

The Minority Surety Bond Workshops will be held on the third Tuesday of each month beginning February

19. Each workshop will explain the application process, differentiate bid bonds from payment & performance bonds and describe the types of jobs eligible for the Surety Bond Program.

Each session will run from 2:00 – 3:30 p.m. in the Conference Room 7A of the Woolfolk Building at 501 North West Street in downtown Jackson. Space is limited.

For more information or to register, contact one of the following persons: for the Certification Workshops, Joyce Conner, 601-359-3448 or for the Minority Surety Bond Workshops, Donnie Moncure, 601-359-3448.

GULF COAST DELEGATION TRAVELS TO NEW YORK

A delegation of Coast business and tourism leaders, along with city and county elected officials, just returned from a three-day mission to meet with New York financial analysts, investment houses, national business and trade media, and tourism interests to discuss the state of the Coast economy.

The visit, which took place January 7-9, 2002, included meetings with over 25 organizations. The Mississippi Development Authority assisted the group by securing appointments with two key business publications – the Dow Jones Newswire and Bloomberg Business News - through a relationship with Development Counselors International.

Central themes of each meeting were the status of the gaming/tourism market, availability of air service, and city/county finances. Coast representatives distributed a summary of 2001 economic indicators, which was developed by the Harrison County Development Commission.

"This year's trip was very important to give the financial community first-hand information on the impacts we are seeing from 9-11 and outline our projections for the future. Having such a high caliber of people on this trip made the information credible and we hope that it will reap dividends down the line as future investment decisions are made for the state and the Coast region," said

Michael Olivier, Executive Director of the Harrison County Development Commission.

Members of the delegation included: Mayor Robert Bass, City of Long Beach; Mayor Ken Combs, City of Gulfport; Mary Cracchiolo, Public Affairs Manager, Beau Rivage Resort; W.C. Fowler, Commissioner, Harrison County Tourism Commission; Bruce Frallic, Executive Director, Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport; Frank Genzer, Commissioner, Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport Authority; Mayor A.J. Holloway, City of Biloxi; Al Hopkins, Commissioner, Harrison County Tourism Commission; Bob Lutz, President, Harrison County Tourism Commission; Beverly Martin, Executive Director, Gulf Coast Gaming Association; Bruce Nourse, President, Harrison County Development Commission; Michael Olivier; Stephen Richer, Executive Director, Mississippi Gulf Coast Convention & Visitors Bureau; Connie Rockco, Harrison County Board of Supervisors; Chevis Swetman, President, The Peoples Bank; and Misty Velasquez, Director of Communications; Mississippi Gulf Coast Convention & Visitors Bureau.

This is the fifth year for the annual Coast mission to New York.



The Mississippi Development Authority's *Friday Facts* is distributed to MDA staff, economic and community development professionals, legislators and other interested parties. Inquiries regarding this publication or information should be submitted to Stephen Martin, Communications Office, telephone 601.359.3555, fax 601.359.3596, email smartin@mississippi.org. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.mississippi.org.