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Date: March 15, 2001

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT FUNDING TO MISSISSIPPI SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED

JACKSON, Miss., March – Officials with the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) announced today the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) allotment for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2001, has been increased as a result of a new and innovative method proposed by MDA.

Funds from the U.S. Department of Labor have increased from this year's total of 37.4 million to 62.8 million, the largest increase in the nation. Under the Workforce Investment Act, control is vested at the local level through local Workforce Investment Boards. The funds come from the U.S. Department of Labor and then to the local Workforce Investment Boards. About 85 percent of the funds are controlled locally.

According to J.C. Burns, executive director, Mississippi Development Authority, "This substantial increase is a result of our staff working with the Labor Market Information staff at the Employment Service to compile data on unemployment in a different manner." In previous years, counties compiled the data, and many entire counties were not counted in one portion of the formula used to determine funding.

Director of Employment with the Mississippi Development Authority, James Lott presented this information to officials with the U.S. Department of Labor in Washington D.C. Upon review of the plan, the U.S. Department of Labor approved the increase of WIA funds for use in Mississippi.

"Workforce development is a major component of the Advantage Mississippi Initiative. Mississippi has a quality workforce, and this gives us the competitive advantage for better jobs," said J.C. Burns.

(MORE)

Implemented in Mississippi July 1, 2000, the Workforce Investment Act, is a federally funded program that provides for a unique workforce development and employment system designed to meet the needs of businesses, job seekers and people who want to further their careers. The overall purpose of the Workforce Investment Act is to consolidate and improve employment, training, literacy, and vocational rehabilitation programs.

The Workforce Investment Act replaces the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and rewrites federal laws governing programs of job training, adult education and literacy, vocational rehabilitation, GED and youth.

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