

For Immediate Release

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Contact: John Sewell

601-359-2916

GOVERNOR MUSGROVE WELCOMES CARNIVAL CRUISE LINE PASSENGERS TO MISSISSIPPI

(Gulfport, MS) – Governor Ronnie Musgrove today welcomed the passengers aboard Carnival Cruise Lines' newest and largest vessel, the Conquest, as she docked at the Port of Gulfport.

“We are known as the Hospitality State, and I wanted to be here this morning to express on behalf of the citizens of Mississippi how delighted we are to welcome them to Mississippi,” said Governor Musgrove. “We're honored that Carnival Cruise Lines has chosen Mississippi and Gulfport to dock one of their finest vessels. This is a tremendous opportunity to showcase Mississippi's support of the cruise industry.”

The Governor, along with numerous local Mississippi Gulf Coast officials and business leaders, greeted thousands of passengers who have been sailing in the Caribbean for the past week. The Conquest is scheduled to dock in Gulfport for the next few weeks. After greeting a number of the passengers, Governor Musgrove met briefly with Carnival Cruise Lines' officials to outline Mississippi's plans to ensure guests are properly received at the port.

Governor Musgrove also announced the state's lead economic development agency, the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA), has approved a promotional grant to the Mississippi Gulf Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau to assist with their marketing efforts. MDA will also assist the Mississippi Gulf Coast in their public relations efforts to promote the current presence of the Conquest on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Other plans call for MDA to enter into a more extensive partnership with the Mississippi Gulf Coast in the development of marketing plans that foster a successful relationship between Carnival Cruise Lines and Mississippi.

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According to estimates provided by the Mississippi Gulf Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau, the economic impact realized for six-weeks will reach in the millions of dollars. Over six thousand Conquest passengers and crewmembers will pass through the Port of Gulfport each week during the six-week period.

"At the Port of Gulfport, it is our goal to provide Carnival Cruise Lines with the best possible service available. We're thrilled to have them here, and their representatives have been extremely satisfied with our operations," said Don Allee, executive director of the Mississippi State Port at Gulfport.

Marketing and developing the cruise industry for the Mississippi Gulf Coast has been underway for some time. Representatives from Royal Caribbean International, Holland America, Carnival Cruise Lines, Princess Cruises and the Florida Caribbean Cruise Association have conducted site visits to evaluate the destination for homeports and port-of-call activities.

"The success of Mississippi's Gulf Coast is based on diverse appeal," said Steve Richer, executive director of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau. "Visitors have the opportunity to experience a wide variety of amenities including historic and cultural attractions, year-round special events and exciting festivals, golf, saltwater fishing, world-class entertainment and gaming," he said. "In virtually every one of these areas, the Coast has received and continues to receive national recognition."

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