

For Immediate Release

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Governor Musgrove Defends Mississippi Oysters

(Jackson, MS) – In a letter to California Governor Gray Davis, Governor Ronnie Musgrove called for the reconsideration of an emergency ruling from the California Department of Health Services limiting the sale of raw oysters harvested in the Gulf of Mexico between the months of April and October.

The ruling stated that “each year, Californians become seriously ill and die after consuming raw oysters harvested from the states bordering the Gulf of Mexico, contaminated with the pathogen *Vibrio vulnificus*,” a naturally occurring bacteria.

“I am disappointed that you have allowed one of your executive branch departments to propose an Emergency Rule,” Musgrove wrote, “when no documentation or consultation was offered to those who typically consult with representatives of state and federal agencies and the oyster industry in shellfish matters.”

The California Department of Health Services says that, since 1983, 75 people have fallen ill from raw oysters containing the bacteria; 49 of those illnesses resulted in death.

“Even though Mississippi has not had a single confirmed case of *Vibrio vulnificus* associated with the consumption of oysters originating from our growing waters, it is our obligation to better inform the public, especially at-risk individuals, of the potential health risk,” wrote Musgrove. “We continue to strive at providing consumers with safe and wholesome Mississippi oysters.”

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