

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)[View this email in your browser](#)**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

January 25, 2022

CONTACT: Bailey Martinpress@govreeves.ms.gov

Governor Reeves Gives State of the State Address

JACKSON, Miss. — Today, Governor Tate Reeves gave his 2022 State of the State Address. Below is the full transcript;

"Thank you, Lieutenant Governor Hosemann and Speaker Gunn.

To the members of the legislature and other elected officials – thank you. Thank you for your commitment to bettering our state. Thank you for your dedication to our people.

Together, we can do great things. I look forward to partnering with you this session to continue making Mississippi the best state in the nation to live, to work, and to raise a family.

I would also be remiss if I did not thank the person who enables me to stand here in the first place. Someone who always puts others before herself. Someone who is an amazing ambassador for our state – our great First Lady. Elee, thank you for everything you do for me and for Mississippi. I could not ask for a better partner and Mississippi could not ask for a better First Lady.

through it all together.

That is why, after recession and pandemic and hurricanes and tornadoes, I can still stand before you tonight and declare, without reservation, and without qualification, that the state of our state is not only strong, but stronger than it has ever been.

I would like to start with what I consider to be the crowning achievement of Mississippi's ride through the pandemic and recession – our educators.

It is the most basic promise a state government makes to its people. We tell every young parent: we will be your partner in educating your child. Together, we will make sure that if they work hard, they will learn what they need to know.

It is a solemn promise and one that our state must fulfill – and it is a promise that I am determined to fulfill.

We all know that there are many who enjoy criticizing Mississippi. They trash our way of life, they trash our institutions, and they frequently deride our education.

And at times in our past, they might have been at least a little bit right about our educational system. But Mississippi's schools have made a major turnaround – in fact, a turnaround of historic proportions.

When you look at the data, it looks like a miracle. But it is not a miracle. It is the product of dedication of our teachers, a result of the intelligence of our people, and conservative, common-sense reforms enacted by many of us here today. And most importantly, it is achievement that was earned by Mississippi students.

Mississippi's students with disabilities have seen a graduation rate that has doubled over the last eight years. Overall, our graduation rate is now at an all-time high at 87.7 percent. That's, by the way, better than the national average. And while the graduation rate is at an all-time high, the dropout rate is at an all-time low of just 8.8 percent.

Our passing rate on Advanced Placement exams is also at an all-time high.

The number of students who completed career and technical courses has shot up by 36 percent since 2015.

You all know how fond I am of data. I love it. I swim in it. It's what I do for fun – and yes, I realize how uncool that makes me. In fact, just ask my teenage daughters if you have any doubt about how uncool I am.

But this is not merely data on a page. These numbers are real people. These are real lives that have been transformed – and family trajectories that have been forever altered.

The Mississippi kids who have out-performed previous generations in the classroom are going to make our state better as adults. We are talking about generational change in careers and horizons – and it is happening in every corner of Mississippi.

I attribute these educational gains to three important factors. First, the parents and guardians of our students. Without you investing in your children's educations, without you pushing them to be their very best, none of these gains would be possible.

It all starts and ends with parents. Mississippi schools and teachers answer to parents. They are paid for by you. They work for you.

It is shocking to me, that in some corners of this country, the basic right of parents to determine their child's education is ignored. We must strive to be better than that. We recognize that no classroom can replace a parent's care. Your voice should not just be heard, it should be sought. It should reign. All public servants answer to the people. In education, we answer to the parents and as long as I'm governor, we always will.

We've also seen these historic gains because of the conservative and effective education reforms we've implemented over the last decade.

Expect more and you will get more. That is a lesson Mississippi has had to learn.

The rigorous reading standards that we put in place have transformed lives and the data prove it.

Since those standards were created, we've experienced incredible gains in fourth grade reading. Just a few months ago The Economist noted, Mississippi's fourth graders rose 20 places – from 49th to 29th – on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and in 2019 we were the “only state in the nation to improve its scores.”

Students of all backgrounds are having academic success in Mississippi. According to 2019 NAEP results, our students living in poverty are outperforming their peers nationally. Black, white, and Hispanic students from low-income households achieved higher scores than the national average in all four NAEP subjects.

For decades we were at the bottom, but now we are not. It takes time to go from last to first. But Mississippi kids are on the move, and it is revitalizing our state's future.

Now, they say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Well, all of you should be flattered. Again, according to The Economist – and this is a direct quote – “Many states have noticed Mississippi's success and have passed similar legislation.”

When is the last time you heard that? From Pascagoula to Iuka and from Natchez to Tunica, every single person in Mississippi should be proud.

These education reforms and the gains they have wrought, is what happens when Republicans and Democrats come together. When we set aside our differences, and focus on what matters most, there is no limit to what Mississippians can achieve.

That is why I am asking the legislature to keep it up, and to invest in math coaches, just as we did for reading, to ensure that we continue to see improved results.

The final vital factor in our education gains is our teachers. Unlike other states throughout the pandemic, most of Mississippi's teachers stepped up. They did not cower in fear and refuse to come into the classroom. In fact, it was just the opposite. While other states resorted to Zoom for years on end, Mississippi's teachers took to the chalkboard. When teachers in other states said, “no we won't,” Mississippi's teachers said, “yes we will.”

They did not walk out, they stepped up. Now I want you to stand up for them. I would like for everyone to take just a moment and give our teachers the applause they deserve.

Thank you.

As the great Mississippian B.B. King once said, “The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you.”

Those who pushed long-term school closures would have taken that opportunity away from our

But we chose to not let that happen. Teachers in Mississippi did not, and will not, back down amid this unprecedented educational battle between a virus and a child's right to learn.

That is why we must give our teachers the pay raise they deserve.

Y'all know that I am a conservative. Many of you are too. As conservatives, we believe in rewarding hard work and success. There is no doubt that Mississippi teachers fit that mold.

I'm confident that in this session, working together, we will get a significant teacher pay raise done. It is my number one priority. Credit goes to where credit is due and in COVID-19, Mississippi teachers deserve the credit.

There is one cloud on the horizon for our schools and it's one that we need to address.

Across the country, there is a looming threat in too many schools. It is propaganda that seeks to divide us. It's what's called critical race theory. It doesn't really matter what you call it. And I'm not interested in semantics. I'm interested in the integrity of our civic education. In too many schools in other states, they teach the lie that America is inherently racist. They teach students that by virtue of the color of your skin you are inherently a victim or oppressor. They teach this for a purpose.

It is designed to allow a small group of ideologues to pose as saviors—false heroes. It is arrogance and ambition, masquerading as education. When you are a victim by birth, only their generosity can save you. When you are an oppressor by birth, only your silent cooperation with their radical worldview can sanctify you.

There is no country on this earth without sin in its past. That is because there is no person on this earth without sin. Sin is inherent in the human condition. Injustice is still too present today. We must teach that truth. We must learn from our history.

But we can also proudly teach that America is the first nation in history to be born of ideals—not just blood and soil. We are not a nation created by a tribe, but a melting pot of people committed to common purpose.

We work to live up to those ideals every single day. Yes, sometimes, we fall short. But then we get up. We keep stretching towards that promise, enshrined in our founding documents: that all Americans are created equal with rights bestowed by their creator.

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

and freedom. Racism is not unique to America. Injustice is not unique to America. It is endemic in humanity because humanity is sinful. But the American notion that God grants rights that no one can take away – that notion is still transforming the entire planet.

When we teach American children to fear one another because of their skin, we reverse the great trend towards achieving our American dream. The promise of America is replaced with a vicious lie: that you are doomed to failure or evil based on your race. We must stop this trend in its tracks, and we can do our part in Mississippi.

Today, I am calling on the State Board of Education to adopt the values that combat critical race theory in their educational efforts. To affirm that Mississippi's public educators will not indoctrinate students in ideology that insists this country, or this state, are inherently racist. We will not teach that your race determines your status as a victim or oppressor. No school district shall teach that one race is inherently superior or that an individual is unconsciously or inherently racist because of how they are born. No child will be divided or humiliated because of their race. We will strive for equality, and our education will support that aspiration.

This is an important common step we can take to ensure that Mississippi is committed to equality. Honesty about our past, and bold and optimistic determination about our future.

The legislature can bolster that effort by passing legislation to this effect. We will teach all of our history — good and bad. And that will lead to a brighter future. I know that our teachers can and will lead the way and I ask the legislature to set down that path.

These investments in our schools are not a pipe dream.

We can afford them. We can afford them in large part, because of our economic resilience.

Mississippi continues to be in the best fiscal shape and the best financial shape in its history. Mississippi ended the year a billion dollars over revenue estimates.

This was not an accident.

We kept our businesses open and helped ensure Mississippians could continue putting food on their table. And they kept working. Bravely and calmly and rationally, they put on their boots, they showed up for work, and our state is better for it.

We also refuse to incentivize the opposite. Mississippi was one of the first states to end the

In November, Mississippi's weekly unemployment claims reached their lowest point since 2018. That's because, in Mississippi, jobs are plentiful. In the four months after we announced the ending of the pandemic unemployment benefits, employers hired at a pace nearly 60 percent faster than before the announcement. In the month of June alone, Mississippi's businesses hired more than 72,000 workers. That's more than any other month in state history.

While we are proud of how we weathered the economic storm, survival is simply not enough.

We should never be satisfied until every Mississippian has access to the best jobs, skills, and upward mobility needed to better themselves and their families.

That's why one of my top priorities is to continue investing in our people. To continue investing in workforce and skills training Mississippians need to thrive in today's economy.

I said in my first address, upon taking this office, that at the end of my time as governor we will measure our success in the wages of our workers. We don't just want people to have any job. We want them to have a career. A family-supporting career that gives them not just a paycheck, but joy.

One of the things we should all be able to agree on, is that together, we passed one of the most consequential pieces of workforce development legislation in Mississippi's history. When we created Accelerate Mississippi, we set our state up to better prepare Mississippians for the jobs of the next 50 years, not the jobs of the last 50 years. Through that legislation, we were able to streamline our workforce development efforts to ensure we have a clear strategy – a strategy that will meet the needs of employers and fill the vacancies for jobs that offer above average wages.

To date, we have awarded over \$11.5 million in RESTORE Act funds towards high-value workforce development programs. Additionally, Accelerate has awarded almost \$12 million in grants to get more people into good careers.

Careers like commercial trucking, advanced manufacturing, welding, utility line working, and fiber. They pay well and they offer security.

Doing things the right way to build a skilled labor pool takes time. Companies realize this and so should we. Our work is just beginning. Months, and in some cases years, for people to acquire the skills they need to obtain these high-paying jobs.

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

Recommendation I proposed allocating \$130 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds to support this effort. I believe that if we make this investment, Mississippi will develop that workforce of the future and set up our state for success for years to come.

We also know that for Mississippi to grow, we must attract more economic activity. We need to be bold. We need to attract the kind of work that creates wealth for all Mississippians.

First, we need to take care of the basics. We have a historic opportunity to invest in our core infrastructure – to take nearly \$2 billion of federal money and put it into real, transformative projects.

I want to echo and appreciate the sentiment from Lieutenant Governor Hosemann: We must stay focused on those investments that will have an impact not for one or two years, but for one or two generations. I whole-heartedly support his plan to put the bulk of that money into local infrastructure projects that can put those concerns behind us for years.

We also need to consider how to attract those companies and economic projects that transform communities—create generational wealth and lift families out of poverty.

This does not just happen one project at a time. It takes a bold vision that lasts forever. The heart of that vision is the elimination of the state's income tax.

By eliminating the income tax, we can put ourselves in a position to stand out. We can win those projects. We can throw out the welcome mat for the dreamers and the visionaries. We can have more money circulating in our economy. And it can lead to more wealth for all Mississippians.

I am begging Mississippi legislators to be bold. Give us another arrow in our quiver to attract more capital and to continue to transform our economy.

When someone in California or Illinois or even Louisiana decides to start their own business, let's make them consider doing it right here in Mississippi. Let's tell them that they are guaranteed to keep more of the first dollar of profit they earn if they come to our state.

The only way to make Mississippi a magnet for the entrepreneurs of our nation is to show them our unmatched culture – married to an unbeatable tax code.

I know that many of you have already demonstrated an appetite for such boldness, and I want

Chairman Lamar, thank you for your hard work and your commitment to this ongoing effort. If we can eliminate the income tax, we will achieve an historic victory for this state. We can become a place that money flows more freely, and all Mississippians will benefit.

Please do not let this moment pass without achieving something big. We can invest in our workers, water, and workforce. We can attract more wealth that can transform our economic potential. We can grow this great state to achieve what we all know we are capable of. That should be our ambition throughout this session.

We are governing in a time of plenty. Good decisions have brought us a great harvest.

If we do not lead boldly, when this time of great resources passes, I believe we will look back with regret. We have done the hard work to secure our fiscal situation. Now let us return that largesse to the people and unleash Mississippi's economy.

We know that our economic situation would not be so secure if it were not for our handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have lost many Mississippians to this virus. And we mourn their loss every day.

We also know we cannot lock ourselves away behind screens and live in fear. We choose to protect ourselves as we see fit. We choose to reject panic and embrace a life worth living.

And here in Mississippi, we realize that your life is a gift from God, and it is sacred. That comes straight from His word, which reads in Deuteronomy: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days."

In this time of fear, there are many who have suffered from despair. They have wondered if their lives are worth keeping. I want to tell all of you—anyone who needs to hear it—that you are loved. You are valued. Your life has purpose and your life has meaning. Your state needs you. Even if you don't know it, your life is a blessing to others. We are glad that you are here, living and with us.

I pray for the same protection over those who are most vulnerable. Those who need our protection more than any other. Those innocent Mississippi children whose lives are precious. I pray every one of them can be regarded with the same basic respect. That most core human right: the right to life. The right of these children not to be killed before having the chance to be

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

Mississippians are leading the charge to defend those children. Mississippi and the Supreme Court's landmark case is on a path to preserving millions of lives for generations to come. There is no excuse for America's abortion laws to be closer to the Chinese communists than the rest of the western world.

If we are successful before the Supreme Court, our work will not be done. We must acknowledge and champion the fact that being pro-life is about more than being anti-abortion. We should be doing everything in our power to make Mississippi the most family-oriented state in the country. We should be doing everything in our power to make Mississippi the safest and most supportive state in the country for mothers. And we should be doing everything in our power to promote a culture of life.

In the coming months, we will be promoting plans to further protect mothers in our state. To ensure that they don't just receive the basics— that they get the best possible care during their pregnancy.

We will work to make it even easier to adopt a Mississippi child into a forever home. We will go further than preventing abortion.

I have been proud to push for laws that restrict abortion and protect innocent life. But I do not pretend that those laws mean the work for life is done.

We will lead in the effort to be pro-life in every sense of the word. It is vitally important, and I will be asking all of our legislative allies to commit to that work together.

Another area where our collaboration is going to be key, is improving Mississippi's corrections system. Two years ago, as I took office, we were facing prison riots that resulted in serious violence.

To address the issues in the system, we needed a cultural reset. To ensure that we took control and took proper care of those who were serving time. To preserve the safety of our citizens, we needed to stem the rising tide of violence.

I am proud to say that culture overhaul is happening. The system is different than it was two years ago. We are making incredible progress. Under the leadership of Commissioner Cain, we are hiring more guards. We are combatting gang violence. We are turning the tide and we are taking control.

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

discipline, the cycle of violence continues. The inmate returns.

We can break that cycle, for hundreds of inmates, and that will lead us to a safer state. We are committed to offering hope of a better life. That begins with opportunity. Today, in state prisons, we are working hard to offer training and meaningful work. That can not only fill the days, it can set an offender up for a peaceful life on the outside.

Just last month, Commissioner Cain unveiled a mobile welding training center that will help train inmates for a career in welding, post-release. The mobile welding training center – which by the way was not paid for with taxpayer funds – can train 32 inmates at a time and will rotate between prisons every 90 days. At the end of the program, trainees who complete it will receive a certification that they can use to find a job.

But that's not the only program we're leveraging to train inmates. For example, the Automotive Service Excellence Certification, where inmates can learn to work on car motors and small engines. Or the National Center for Construction Education and Research Certification, which prepares enrollees in a variety of skills that will help translate to jobs in the construction industry. These programs work, and we need more of them.

Now, some of you may be asking yourself, why should we be offering these types of opportunities to those who have been convicted of a crime? Why should we allocate funds towards educational opportunities for those who are incarcerated? The answer is actually pretty straightforward – because it's a wise investment.

The proof is in the numbers. The average cost to house an inmate in 2020 was over \$50 a day. The cost for vocational training, depending on the program, is approximately \$2,000 a year. The question you may ask is, well is it worth it? The short answer is an emphatic yes.

Here's why. In 2020, the general recidivism rate in Mississippi was 37.4 percent. According to the Department of Corrections, initial data shows that under Commissioner Cain's leadership, the recidivism rate for those who have completed re-entry and vocational training is less than half that.

What does that mean for you? As a taxpayer, a \$2,000 investment can save you over \$18,000 a year. But most importantly, there will be fewer crimes, fewer victims, safer communities, and a skilled workforce that has a second chance at life.

If we want to break the cycle of recidivism, we must invest in a cycle of education and learning.

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

six months. Additionally, I've proposed funding to expand the work release pilot program – that has already shown so much promise – to each of Mississippi's 82 counties.

I think and we can all agree that no matter how much we invest in training for those reentering society, there will always be a crime element present. It will never be completely eliminated.

That is tragically obvious today. In 2020, our capital city set a record of 130 murders. In 2021, it increased to over 150 murders. That is unacceptable. Let's put these numbers in perspective. In the city of Atlanta, there was a historic crime wave. People there are rushing to reform – electing new city leadership promising to combat the violence. They saw 158 murders in 2021. In Jackson, Mississippi, even though Atlanta is more than triple our size, we saw roughly the same number of murders in that year. The rate of killings in Jackson is three times worse than Chicago. It is worse than St. Louis, Baltimore, and Memphis. The violence scars families for generations. Our community is torn apart by senseless acts of mayhem. If our state is to thrive, we need a capital city of order. Governed by laws, not abandoned to daily violence. We all have an interest in stopping this deadly cycle.

We can do our part to go down a brighter road. Create a capital city that is vibrant, full of life, and safe. A capital city where residents don't have to fear for their safety. A capital city where parents can let their children run around in the yard without having to fear if they'll be home for dinner.

I believe *that* Jackson still exists. I have faith that we have what it takes to make Jackson a city that is a hub for business and capital investment. A city where jobs are plentiful, and opportunity is only limited by how hard you want to work.

Reasonable citizens must take back control from those who only wish harm to their neighbors. Their day is ending in Jackson. The men and women of local law enforcement will always be the first line of defense. The frontline officers who feel abandoned cannot be left to their own devices. That is why I have championed an expansion of the scope of our Capitol Police force. To support local law enforcement and to bring peace back to Jackson.

To our law enforcement officers who wake up every day, put on the badge, and risk their own personal safety to protect and serve us, thank you. As long as I'm governor, I will do everything I can to provide you with the tools and resources you need to keep us, and yourself, safe.

That's why I want to work with the legislature to get you the support you need. It's why I proposed doubling the size of our Capitol Police, so there will be more boots on the ground as

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

Doubling the size of our Capitol Police, is the first, most immediate action we can take within the State's jurisdiction. We have the ability to do it, and we must.

We also know that alone is not enough. Capturing violent criminals does nothing if our justice system puts them right back on the streets. I am eager to work with the legislature to develop resources for targeted prosecution and conviction of violent felons here. Catch and release has caused nothing but record crime and chaos. All of us can agree on that. We need to find those who are leading the efforts to flood our capital with illegal drugs and guns—and put them behind bars where they belong. We need to bring focused attention to those orchestrating these efforts. Not to catch more people speeding or loitering. But to arrest, charge, and eradicate the ringleaders who make life hell for the peaceful residents of Jackson.

After the day's shifts have ended, and our law enforcement officers head back to their families, that doesn't mean our support of the men and women in blue is over. It doesn't mean we should stop recognizing the sacrifices they make daily. It doesn't mean we should forget about their gallant actions over the last two years, or the expanded duties placed upon them because of the pandemic. It's one of the reasons why I authorized \$1,000 in one-time hazard pay for each sworn state law enforcement officer who actively served during the COVID-19 State of Emergency. Today, I call on the legislature to do the same for local law enforcement.

Over the last two years, some of our law enforcement officers made the ultimate sacrifice in their service to us. We have benefits in place for those who fell at the hands of violence or in other tragic circumstances in the line of duty. These officers fell victim to an enemy that couldn't even been seen – COVID-19. These officers will never again make it home to their families. There will be missed birthdays, graduations, weddings, birth of children, and more. And if they contracted the virus while serving and protecting, that should be counted as a line of duty death. That's why this session, we need to appropriate additional money towards the Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters Death Benefits Trust Fund. Doing so will be a final act of gratitude to the men and women who gave it all to keep us safe.

To all our law enforcement officers, Mississippi will always back the blue. Again, thank you for everything you've done and thank you for everything you will do.

We have many great opportunities before us. We can look back on what we've survived. We can look back on the gains we've accomplished. And we can be proud of one another. We must also dedicate ourselves to more hard work. To tackle those challenges and seize chances for greatness. We can do amazing things together if we focus on doing what's right. And, if we have the fortitude to do what's right, boldly. I know that each of you can commit to

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

Thank you. God bless you. And God bless the state of Mississippi."

To find the full video on Governor Reeves' Facebook page, click [here](#).

###



Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can update your preferences or unsubscribe from this list.