



Michael Watson
SECRETARY OF STATE



COVID-19 Tips, Resources and Relief Efforts

Thursday, May 14, 2020



Financial Relief for MS Small Businesses

The Mississippi Legislature passed legislation that, once signed into law by Governor Reeves, will appropriate \$300 million for small businesses that have been impacted by COVID-19. **Senate Bill 2772 sets aside \$300 million from the Coronavirus Relief Fund to create two programs providing a direct payment to some businesses and a grant to others.**

The direct payment program would provide qualifying businesses that shut down — including hair salons, fitness centers, and some restaurants — a flat \$2,000 check. All small businesses with 50 or fewer employees experiencing interruption due to COVID-19 can apply for the “Back to Business Mississippi Grant Fund,” authorizing up to \$25,000 for costs incurred as a result of the virus.

The legislation provides \$60 million to the direct payment program and \$240 million to grants. For the first 60 days, \$40 million from the grant program will be set aside for minority-owned businesses. The first 21 days of the application period will only be available to businesses that did not receive funds from the Paycheck Protection Program or Economic Injury Disaster Loan Emergency Advance, any other federal program, or compensation from business interruption insurance.

To qualify under either program, a business must:

- Have registered with the Mississippi Department of Revenue on or before March 1, 2020;
- Have filed state taxes for the 2018 or 2019 tax year, or plan to file state taxes for 2020 (only businesses which were created on or after January 1, 2020);
- Not be a subsidiary of a business with 50 or less employees, or be part of or owned by a larger business enterprise with 50 or less employees; and

- Be controlled by one or more Mississippi residents.

The programs are available to all small businesses, including sole proprietorships.

[Click here to read the full text of the bill.](#)

Unemployment Benefits

Governor Reeves signed an executive order that extends unemployment benefits for Mississippians still feeling the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Executive Order 1481 amends the Governor's initial unemployment order, [E.O. 1462](#), which began the process of expediting payments to unemployed Mississippians. Executive Order 1481 does the following:



- Waives the one-week waiting period to receive unemployment benefits for all claims filed from March 8, 2020 to December 26, 2020. Under the initial Executive Order No. 1462, the waiting period was waived until June 27.
- Increases the \$40 earning allowance to \$200 from May 3, 2020 until June 27, 2020.
- Waives any interest from April 1, 2020 to June 27, 2020 on all collection activities suspended under the Executive Order. The offset of future benefits due to over payments will be reduced to 25% from March 29, 2020 until June 27, 2020.

[Click here to read additional updates under Executive Order 1481.](#)



Financial Assistance for First Responders

Attorney General Lynn Fitch filed a temporary emergency rule change to allow first responders to make claims for financial assistance with the Law Enforcement Officers and Fire Fighters Disability Benefits Trust Fund when they contract COVID-19 on duty. The Office of the Attorney General administers the Trust Fund. It pays disability benefits to career and volunteer firefighters and law enforcement officers when they sustain injuries in the line of duty and cannot work.

The temporary emergency rule change includes two new forms, one from a doctor verifying positive COVID-19 test results and one from a supervisor verifying that the first responder was exposed in the line of duty. If approved, the first responder may be eligible for a disability payment equal to 34% of the covered individual's work wages. The rule change will be in effect until September 4, 2020, and could be extended if the circumstances continue to warrant assistance for this exposure.

To find out more or to file a claim, contact General Fitch's Office at (601) 359-6766 or LEOFFund@ago.ms.gov.

[Click here to view the temporary rule change.](#)

At-Home Learning



Mississippi Public Broadcasting realizes the many challenges parents and educators face as both do their best to keep students up to speed during the pandemic. The network teamed up with PBS to provide fun and educational resources online and on TV.

MPB launched an At-Home Learning web page filled with information and activities aimed to keep students engaged during their time away from the classroom. In addition, MPB Television changed the programming on its main channel to educational content geared toward PreK-12th grade students. The curriculum-related programming is available 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

[Click here to view MPB's at-home learning resources and programming schedule.](#)

Executive Orders

[Executive Order 1483](#)

Executive Order 1483 establishes additional restrictions for Attala, Leake, Scott, Jasper, Neshoba, Newton and Lauderdale Counties to slow the spread of COVID-19.

[Executive Order 1482](#)

Executive Order 1482 designates May 15 of each year as "Peace Officers Memorial Day" and the week in which it falls as "Police Week."

[Executive Order 1481](#)

Executive Order 1481 extends the unemployment benefits provided to help Mississippians affected by COVID-19, and replaces the Governor's initial unemployment order, E.O. 1462, which began the process of expediting payments to unemployed Mississippians.

[Executive Order 1480](#)

Executive Order 1480 lays out strict social distancing guidelines to begin the process

of slowly and safely reopening salons,
barbershops, and gyms.

[Click here to view all Executive Orders.](#)

Emergency Contact Information

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| Office of the Governor of Mississippi <i>Tate Reeves</i> | (601) 359-3150 governor@govreeves.ms.gov |
| Mississippi State Department of Health | (877) 978-6453 |
| Mississippi Emergency Management Agency | (601) 933-6362 |
| Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | (800) 232-4636 |
| Mississippi Department of Employment Security | (601) 855-3133 1-888-844-3577 (<i>toll-free</i>) 1-888-772-0061 (<i>toll-free</i>) |