



Michael Watson
SECRETARY OF STATE



COVID-19 Tips, Resources and Relief Efforts

Thursday, May 21, 2020



Paycheck Protection Program Application

The U.S. Small Business Administration, in consultation with the U.S. Department of the Treasury, released the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Loan Forgiveness Application with detailed instructions on how to fill out the form properly. The information available now includes step-by-step instructions for determining forgiveness eligibility and clarifications for small business owners struggling to rehire their employees or calculate their payroll expenses.

Newly-released instructions include several measures to reduce compliance burdens and simplify the process for borrowers, including:

- Options for borrowers to calculate payroll costs using an “alternative payroll covered period” that aligns with borrowers’ regular payroll cycles
- Flexibility to include eligible payroll and non-payroll expenses paid or incurred during the eight-week covered period
- Step-by-step instructions on how to perform the calculations required by the CARES Act to confirm eligibility for loan forgiveness
- Borrower-friendly implementation of statutory exemptions from loan forgiveness reduction based on rehiring by June 30
- Addition of a new exemption from the loan forgiveness reduction for borrowers who have made a good-faith, written offer to rehire workers that was declined

[Click here to view the application and instructions.](#)

COVID-19 Impact on Elections

With the general election less than six months away, our office is well aware of the concerns regarding COVID-19's impact on the 2020 election cycle. While we hope to have this behind us by Election Day, we realize the importance of having a plan in place to protect voters and the integrity of our elections amid the pandemic.



Our team is consulting with Election Commissioners, Circuit Clerks, and legislators across the state to brainstorm ways Mississippi voters can exercise their right to vote without jeopardizing their health. Part of our plan includes urging the legislature to adopt an additional absentee excuse to allow Mississippians to absentee vote in person when they are subject to a state of emergency declared by the Governor or President.

Rest assured, our office will inform voters of any changes to the voting process. In the meantime, stay in tune with information from our office, and, most importantly, stay healthy.

[Click here to read more about our plan for November's general election.](#)

[Click here to visit Mississippi's online voter information center.](#)



Coronavirus Food Assistance Program

Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce, Andy Gipson, is encouraging all Mississippi farms to sign up for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP). The program provides direct payments to farmers and ranchers whose business has been significantly damaged by COVID-19.

In order to be eligible for a payment, a producer must have suffered a 5-percent-or-greater price loss over a specified time resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak or face additional significant marketing costs for inventories. Additionally, producers will have to certify that they meet the Adjusted Gross Income limitation of \$900,000 unless at least 75 percent or more of their income is derived from farming, ranching or forestry-related activities. Producers must also be in compliance with Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation provisions.

There is a payment limitation of \$250,000 per person or entity for all commodities combined. Applicants who are corporations, limited liability companies or limited partnerships may qualify for additional payment limits where members actively provide personal labor or personal management for the farming operation.

To ensure the availability of funding throughout the application period, producers will receive 80 percent of their maximum total payment upon approval of the application. The remaining portion of the payment, not to exceed the payment limit, will be paid at a later date as funds remain available.

The application process for payments will begin on May 26, 2020.

[Click here for more information regarding the CFAP.](#)



Guidelines for In-Person Worship Services

Governor Reeves released social distancing and sanitation guidelines for in-person worship services to safely resume across Mississippi. State health officials developed guidelines for worship leaders and their congregations to practice their faiths in unison while continuing to help protect public health and flatten the curve.

Churches and places of worship were deemed an essential business or operation, and were never instructed to close, though they were encouraged to offer services online and remotely to help slow the spread of COVID-19. The guidelines include steps to prepare houses of worship, plan for logistics and worship programming, and direct staff and worship leadership on social distancing protocols.

[Click here to view the full guidelines for in-person worship services.](#)

Census Self-Response Deadline Extended

Invitations to fill out the 2020 Census questionnaire started going out to Mississippians in mid-March. At the time, the deadline for completion was July 31. Due to the pandemic, the federal government has **extended the self-response deadline to October 31**. As we begin to phase back into somewhat of our normal routines, it is still important for Mississippians to submit their questionnaires as soon as possible.

United States
Census
2020

As of today, May 21, 2020, **Mississippi has a 55.2% self-response rate**, which means more than half of our state's population has responded to the census online, by phone or by mail. **For every person who does not respond, our state will be shortchanged by about \$50,000 over the next 10 years.** The 2020 Census is your chance to make sure the hard-earned tax dollars you send to Washington, D.C. make their way back to Mississippi.

[Click here to respond to the 2020 Census online.](#)

Executive Orders

[Executive Order 1486](#)

Executive Order 1486 lays out strict social distancing guidelines and sanitation protocols for tattoo parlors and permits restaurants that do not serve alcohol to offer in-house dining 24 hours a day, while restaurants that serve alcohol must close in-house dining no later than 10 p.m.

[Executive Order 1485](#)

Executive Order 1485 extends the duration of EO 1471 to May 30, 2020. EO 1471 grants immunity from suit for civil liability to

healthcare professionals and facilities that provide care related to COVID-19.

[Executive Order 1484](#)

Executive Order 1484 amends EO 1458 and EO 1460 to direct state agencies, boards, commissions, counties, municipalities, public school districts and other state and local entities to begin the process of returning employees who duties were deemed non-essential back to work, subject to the state's and CDC's regulations and guidelines.

[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.

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

Emergency Contact Information

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