

Federal revenue is the largest source of revenue for Mississippi's state budget, contributing more to the state's overall economy than state tax collections and other sources.

THE MISSISSIPPI STATE BUDGET

Historically, Mississippi's dependency on federal funds is established. And the recent influx of federal aid has helped stabilize the state's economy during the COVID-19 pandemic, promote higher state tax revenue growth, and create the state's current budget surplus. This experience is similar to budget surpluses occurring in states across the nation and similar to patterns experienced after recessions.

Pandemic relief aid is temporary. Economists across the country have cautioned an upcoming potential economic downturn. As a result, state revenue growth must be protected by state policy decisions.

Currently, state leadership has publicized Mississippi's economic progress as a result of sound policy decisions. However, recent policy decisions from state leaders have placed arbitrary limits on the state's future potential revenue growth, thereby widening disparities and contributing to state divestment in our communities.

A sound economy is dependent upon public investments that improve people's lives and strengthen communities. Federal lawmakers have committed to that goal in Mississippi. State leaders must act to do the same.

OVERVIEW

Strong public investments in the services communities rely on that help families make ends meet, keep families in their homes, help families achieve economic security, keep workers employed, help students achieve their best, keep people healthy and safe, and keep businesses open is like giving gas to the economy's engine. And despite claims that Mississippi's economic outlook is stronger than ever and that state leaders are responsible for the state's recent progress, economists and historical data say otherwise.¹

Instead, it has been federal lawmakers who have shown commitment to making historic investments in people and communities across the state through federal pandemic relief packages and other supports. That federal aid has helped stabilize our economy through crisis, promote economic growth, and reduce disparities in the state. On the contrary, state leadership's inconsistent and tangled relationship with federal aid has hindered the collective goal of creating a better Mississippi for all the state's residents—no matter race, place, or political party.

Temporary federal aid does not equate to lasting economic progress. State leaders must use every resource available from the federal government as well as enact their own investments to build a more inclusive, long-standing state economy, undo years of budget policies that have created inequitable opportunities for Mississippians, and reverse the course on continued state divestment in our communities.

MISSISSIPPI IS DEPENDENT ON FRDERAL REVENUE TO MAINTAIN THE STATE BUDGET AND FUND CRITICAL PUBLIC SERVICES.

Federal funds make up Mississippi's largest revenue source and do more to support important investments in public services that all Mississippians want and need like quality schools, accessible healthcare, and solid infrastructure than taxes collected from the state and other revenue sources that make up the state budget.

The state budget is generally comprised of money from three main funds—General Funds, Special Funds, and Federal Funds.² General Funds come from general state tax collections and pay for key services provided by the state, including K-12 education, colleges and universities, and corrections.³ Special Funds are supported by fees, fines, assessments, or special taxes and are established through state statutes or constitutional provisions that allocate funds for a specific purpose.⁴ On the other hand, Federal Funds are earmarked by the U.S. government for specific state programs.⁵ They are earmarked annually by the Mississippi State Legislature but must be spent in keeping with federal rules regarding how the legislature spends the funds.⁶

In the context of the state budget, Mississippi's fiscal year extends from July 1 of one year to June 30 of the next.⁷ And the state's general activities are recorded in governmental funds.⁸

For Fiscal Year 2022 ("FY 2022"), which ended June 30, 2022, state revenue totaled \$21.5 billion. Of that revenue, \$10.3 billion came from the federal government.⁹ This represented a decrease of \$4,240,000 or .04% as a result of reduced federal funding related to COVID-19.¹⁰

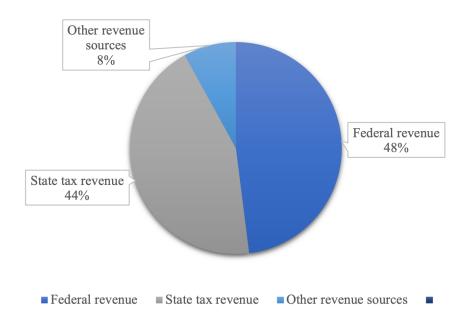
GOVERNMENTAL FUNDS: REVENUE TOTALS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2022 (EXPRESSED IN THOUSANDS)

Federal government	\$10,310,293	
Taxes	\$9,551,488	
Licenses, fees, and permits	\$602,144	
Investment income	\$(273,373)	
Charges for sales and services	\$522,508	
Rentals	\$1,448	
Court assessments and settlements	\$235,872	
Lottery proceeds	\$122,883	
Other	\$480,123	
Total \$21,553,386		

Source: Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration

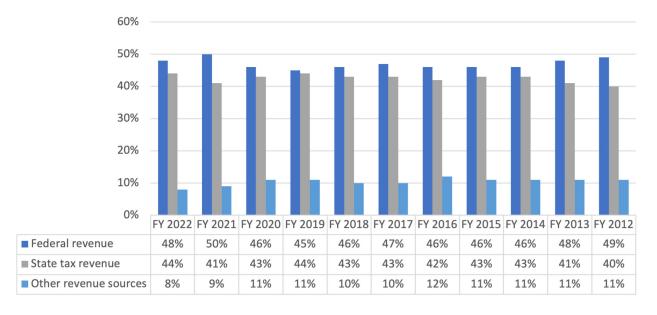
This means that of each dollar collected by the State of Mississippi, approximately 48 cents came from the federal government, 44 cents came from state taxes, and 8 cents came from other revenue sources.

GOVERNMENTAL FUNDS: REVENUE TOTALS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2022



Mississippi's reliance on federal funds as a source of state revenue is established. For the past decade and more, federal funds have represented the largest source of revenue for the state budget.

GOVERNMENTAL FUNDS: REVENUE TOTALS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2022



Source: One Voice's analysis of data from the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration's Annual Comprehensive Financial Report, FY 2012-22.

The federal government obligates most of its funds through mandatory and discretionary grants for a variety of public service programs like Medicaid, federal direct student loans, Head Start, the National School Lunch Program, highway planning and construction, and health care centers. These are programs critical to helping families make ends meet and building stronger communities.

Grant	Description	
Medicald	Provides health coverage to low-income families and individuals.	
Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)	Covers uninsured children up to age 19 in families with incomes too high to qualify for Medicaid.	
Child nutrition programs	Provide breakfast and lunch to low-income students in schools.	
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	Formerly the Food Stamp Program, provides food-purchasing assistance to low-income families and individuals.	
Child support enforcement programs	Provide grants to states and tribes for outreach, referral, and case management to increase parents' ability to support their children.	
Child Care and Development Block Grant	Finances high-quality child care for children with very low incomes whose parents work, are training for work, or attend school, and for children with special needs. It consists of both mandatory and discretionary funding.	
Adoption and Foster Care Program	Helps to provide safe, stable out-of-home care for children until they are safely returned home, placed permanently with adoptive families, or placed in other permanent arrangements.	
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	Provides cash assistance or other services such as child care assistance to poor families with children, and helps support related programs such as foster care.	
Social Services Block Grant	Provides flexible funds states may use to support a variety of social services activities. Child care, foster care, and special services for people with abilities are the largest categories of expenditures under this grant.	

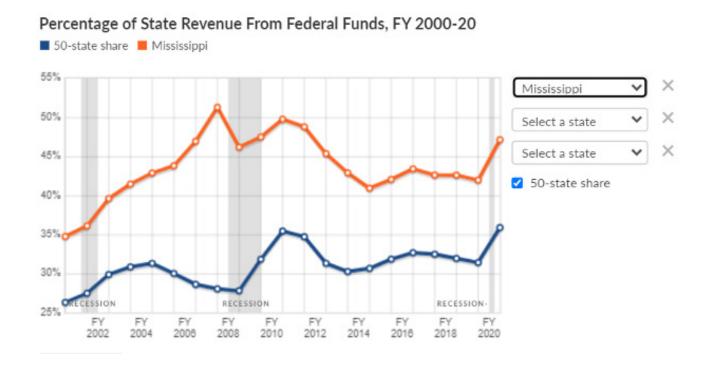
Grant	Description	
Title I funding to high-poverty schools	Provides formula grants for schools with high numbers or proportions of disadvantaged children to help such children meet academic standards.	
Special education in schools (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA)	Provides formula grants to help achools pay for the additional costs associated with reaching students with disabilities.	
Head Start	Offers pre-kindergarten to children from low-income families.	
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, infants, and Children (WIC)	Provides nutritious food and nutritional education to expecting low incommothers and those with children under age 5.	
Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)	Helps people in need pay their home energy bills.	
Section 0 housing vouchers (Housing Choice Voucher Program and Project-Based Rental Program)	Defray part of the rent on a modest apartment or other home in the private market. Boughly half of the low-income households benefiting include seniors or people with disabilities; most of the rest are families with children.	
Community Development Block Grant	Provides grants to states, cities, and counties to revitalize neighborhoods, create jobs through the expansion and retention of businesses, improve water and sever systems, and build community centers, youth centers, an interest, as well as other public infrastructure projects.	
Training and employment services	Provide employment assistance, labor market information, and job training through programs such as the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act, Job Corps, and apprenticealtips.	
Public safety grants	Support state and local law enforcement, juvenile justice programs, community-oriented policing programs, prevention and presecution of violence against women, and combating drug trafficking.	

Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

Nationally, federal revenue as a source of state budgets ranges between 25%-33%.¹¹ Comparatively, during FY 2022, federal funds to states across the country totaled 38% of total state spending.¹² The share of federal revenue as a source of state spending reached its highest totals from 2007-2009, after the Great Recession, and in 2020, at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.¹³

Overall, though, the extent to which states rely on federal revenue to support state budgets varies. In general, states that depend the most on federal aid are states that have more people experiencing poverty, collect lower tax revenues, and have more assistance programs like Medicaid.¹⁴ This narrative is the same for a state like Mississippi that is dependent on federal revenue.

GOVERNMENTAL FUNDS: REVENUE TOTALS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2022



Source: Pew Research Center

Mississippi's reliance or dependency on federal aid can be measured based on its return on tax dollars. In the past, Mississippi had been the state most reliant on federal revenue as a source of the state budget. According to a 2020 report, for every tax dollar sent to the federal government, Mississippi received \$3.40.¹⁵

As such, federal revenue to Mississippi is a critical component of the overall state economy.

FEDERAL LAWMAKERS HAVE COMMITTED TO HISTORIC INVESTMENTS IN OUR COMMUNITIES.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, federal relief packages proved what it looks like when government invests in people and their communities. But since 2020, and particularly President Joe Biden's administration, federal pandemic relief packages have not been the only federal aid provided to Mississippi. The following represents a snapshot of some of the federal aid provided to Mississippi in recent years.

GOVERNMENTAL FUNDS: REVENUE TOTALS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2022

THE CORONAVIRUS AID, RELIEF, AND ECONOMIC SECURITY ACT (CARES ACT) ¹⁶ \$2.5 billion- Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund ¹⁷

\$1.25 billion-Coronavirus Relief Fund

- Education assistance
- Relief aid for states, territories, and tribes

THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT OF 2021^{18}

\$6 billion

- State and local government
- K-12 education
- Higher education
- Capital improvement projects

DISASTER RELIEF 19

\$18 million

- Disaster relief in response to 18
 Mississippi tornadoes between June 14-18
- Housing assistance
- Loans

THE BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW/INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT ²⁰

\$4.46 billion, including \$1.2 billion for broadband internet access

- Roads and bridges
- Water lines and pipes
- Public transportation
- High-speed internet
- Airports
- Electric vehicle charge
- Climate change protection
- Cyberattack protection

H.R. 2617, WATER RESOURCE AND DEVELOPMENT ACT, & AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ${\rm ACT}^{21}$

\$800 million

 Improvements to the City of Jackson's water system

INFLATION REDUCTION ACT ²³

\$13.3 billion

- Clean power generation and storage
- Lower health care costs
- Cut prescription drug prices

THE STATE'S CURRENT BUDGET SURPLUS IS A RESULT OF FEDERAL AID AND IS NOT ENOUGH TO PROVIDE MISSISSIPPIANS WITH THE RESOURCES NEEDED TO THRIVE

For the past few years, state leaders have touted a "budget surplus" as a sign of economic progress and the implementation of successful public policies in the state. However, the state's current budget surplus is a bit of a misnomer. The surplus is actually a mix of federal pandemic relief aid, higher than anticipated state tax and other revenue collections stemming from that aid, cautiously estimated state revenue projections due to economic uncertainty, and leftover revenue from previous fiscal years.

The 2023 Mississippi Legislature began this year's legislative session with nearly \$4 billion more than it anticipated.²⁴ The figure totaled more than half of the state-support budget, or money from state taxes and other special funds, for the year.²⁵ According to experts, the surplus is largely attributed to the one-time, temporary economic stimulus packages from the federal government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁶ In addition, inflation and wage growth added more revenue than anticipated.²⁷ Money from the tobacco and the 2010 Gulf oil rig disaster and BP oil spill lawsuit settlements also contributed to the surplus.²⁸

2023 BUDGET SURPLUS

CAPITAL EXPENSE FUND	\$1.6 billion	Unspent revenue from past legislative sessions
GENERAL FUND	\$1 billion	Tax collections above projections
WORKING CASH STABILIZATION FUND OR RAINY DAY FUNDS	\$579.4 million	Funds reserved for emergencies, such as economic downturns
CORONAVIRUS STATE FISCAL RECOVERY FUNDS	\$298.1 million	Federal funds provided for COVID-19 relief and recovery
THE 2% SET ASIDE	\$150.4 million	State tax collections set aside as required by state law
GULF COAST RESTORATION FUND	\$124.2 million	Money from the 2010 BP oil rig explosion lawsuit settlements
EDUCATION ENHANCEMENT FUND	\$78.9 million	State tax revenue from the 1% sales tax on retail items above projections

HEALTH CARE EXPENDABLE FUND	\$43.1 million	Tobacco-related lawsuit settlement funds
BP SETTLEMENT FUND	\$12.3 million	Money from the 2010 BP oil spill lawsuit settlements

Source: Mississippi Today²⁹

By the end of the last fiscal year, which ended June 30, 2023, Mississippi collected \$7.69 billion, which is 10% more than anticipated, and accumulated nearly \$700 million in surplus funds.³⁰ This is similar to revenue growth shared by most states right now as a result largely of one-time spending decisions related to pandemic relief aid and inflation.³¹

The truth is that these kinds of surpluses are normal, especially after economic recessions. And a similar occurrence can be seen nationally and internationally. There is no doubt that the aid from the federal government in response to the pandemic in 2020 helped make the pandemic-induced recession the shortest on record, reduced unemployment, helped reduce poverty and hardship, and stabilized state revenues.³² As a result, too, by fiscal years 2020 and 2021, state revenues across the county were above pre-pandemic projections, and in FY 2022, states experienced surpluses.³³ Internationally, countries with similar large-scale response efforts also experienced strong economic growth.³⁴

This is because the federal response to the pandemic was unlike the results states experienced with the Great Recession of 2007-2009 and other past recessions.³⁵ The federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic was substantial in terms of size—approximately \$4.6 trillion—and impact—with policies covering health, cash payments, education, unemployment, tax credits, housing, child care, and state and local governments.³⁶ Also, the federal response was targeted to people with the greatest need and included federal guidance to ensure that historically disadvantaged communities like Black people and other people of color, people experiencing poverty, people with low wages, and women benefited. The impact of the aid reduced disparities and was farreaching.³⁷

However, many economists warn that such growth is temporary and that as federal funds dry up, so will many states' economic growth.³⁸ Federal funding provided to states for pandemic relief and recovery aid was substantial and robust. But the money is temporary. Some portions of the funds, like the one-time stimulus payments and expanded unemployment benefits, have already ended.³⁹ Other funds, like the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, must be spent by December 31, 2026.⁴⁰ Also, state sales tax revenues are expected to return to normal following a return-to-normal consumption of goods by consumers as we move further from the pandemic.⁴¹ And ongoing inflation and repeated interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve raise concern from economists across the nation about a potential economic downturn.⁴²

Therefore, state leaders must be cautious to rely on current revenue growth as a sign of permanent, meaningful economic growth in the years to come.

EVEN WITH MISSISSIPPI'S CURRENT BUDGET SURPLUS, STATE REVENUES ARE NOT HIGH ENOUGH TO SUPPORT PUBLIC SERVICES

True economic growth is measured by many factors besides surplus revenues, including real GDP growth, real personal income per capita by state, the distribution of personal income across households, inflation, employment trends, and more.⁴³ But as proven by the federal government's response to economic hardships caused by the pandemic, economies thrive as a result of public investments and equitable budget practices.⁴⁴ That is why many Mississippians do not hold the same views on the economy as state leaders. According to a Mississippi Today poll, only 4% of Mississippians described the state's fiscal condition as "great", 22% as "good," 37% as fair, 32% as "poor," and 4% as unsure.⁴⁵

As a result, the state's current revenue surplus should not give state lawmakers more reason to stow away money needed to better Mississippi. Nor should it shield them from investing in important public services under the guise of economic progress. Despite the state's reliance on federal aid and the impact of the aid in Mississippi, state revenue is currently not enough to support current public services, like education, healthcare, and infrastructure. It is also not enough to make much-needed investments in areas like climate justice, economic justice, and community safety.

Currently, nearly 20% of Mississippians are experiencing poverty, and according to the United Way's A.L.I.C.E. Report, another 31% percent cannot afford basic household necessities. Mississippi families could use support to lift families up and reverse harm from decades of underinvestment in critical public services like health care, cash assistance programs, and housing. Mississippi already has the highest poverty rate in the nation. Our K-12 public education system has only been fully funded twice since 1997. Many of our rural health centers are underfunded or closed. We need to invest in infrastructure, and we need to ensure that our communities are safe for everyone.

Mississippi needs higher state revenues to ensure that all residents' needs are met. And state leaders could do more to use all of the available resources it has to make up for years of inequitable policies and state divestment.

For example, state leaders have consistently rejected federal dollars that would help save lives and help people obtain healthcare—despite accepting federal dollars for other public services as outlined above. Currently, there are over 100,000 uninsured adults in Mississippi with incomes below the poverty line who are caught in the Medicaid "coverage gap" and who would be eligible for Medicaid if the state were to expand its Medicaid program. By expanding Medicaid, Mississippi could not only increase access to healthcare, it could also help reduce health-related disparities and improve the stability of health systems, including rural hospitals and community health centers.

Even more, according to a 2021 report from state economists, Mississippi would save approximately \$206 million to \$227 million annually between 2022 and 2027 if it expanded the program and accepted the 90 percent costs of expansion, which the federal government pays.⁴⁷ But Mississippi is one of ten states that has refused to expand Medicaid. By denying these federal funds, the state is denying access to affordable

healthcare for working families in the state, as well as, increased state revenue from the savings.

In another example, the state is playing a direct role in prohibiting cash assistance from supporting working families through the misuse of TANF funds. For twenty-six years, TANF has provided cash assistance to help families meet basic needs and reduce economic disparities that disproportionately harm Black and other children of color.⁴⁹ Mississippi receives \$86.5 million per year for TANF. But in 2020, the Mississippi State Auditor released a 104-page report that questioned spending decisions by MDHS related to \$94 million of welfare grants and other funds.⁵⁰ The misspending included \$83 million of Federal TANF funds by MDHS over three fiscal years—2017, 2018, and 2019.⁵¹

Money entangled in the scandal could have provided cash assistance to 138,234 Mississippians.⁵² Even before the scandal, Mississippi provided the nation's lowest cash assistance benefits to families with children and had been grappling with limited program access.⁵³ The misuse of these funds only exacerbates Mississippians' access to the program and its intended aid.

In addition, Mississippi continues to sit on federal funds from the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds.⁵⁴ Given the state's high poverty rate, low overall earnings, and economic disparities between Black and white residents, Mississippi should invest in people and communities instead of leaving the money to sit for an election campaign theme.

STATE AND LOCAL FISCAL RECOVERY FUNDS, 10 LOWEST SPENDING AND HIGHEST SPENDING STATES

TABLE 1

State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, 10 lowestspending and highest-spending states

	States	Average share of SLFRF spent	Change in state government employment, Feb 2020–May 2023
Lowest- spending states	Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Missouri, Mississippi, South Dakota, Florida, Nebraska, Montana, Alabama	8.4%	-3.6%
Highest- spending states	Minnesota, Alaska, Maryland, Hawaii, Pennsylvania, California, Illinois, Washington, Oregon, Texas	74.5%	-1.8%

Source: EPI analysis of U.S. Treasury Department SLFRF spending data, Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) Current Employment Statistics, Establishment Survey (CES) public data series.

Economic Policy Institute

Lastly, last year, state lawmakers passed the largest tax cut for the wealthy in the state's history. Under House Bill 531, Mississippi will adopt a 4% "flat tax" on incomes over \$10,000 starting in 2026.⁵⁵ The impact of the bill will result in a \$6,700 tax cut for the top 1% of Mississippians, or those earning \$485,000, on average.⁵⁶ In comparison, middle-income earners in the state would receive \$240 in savings, on average.⁵⁷ And the state's lowest-income earners, or those earning \$19,000, on average, would receive an average savings of \$14—the cost of one adult movie ticket.⁵⁸ In fact, less than 20% of all tax cut dollars will go towards families making less than \$50,000.⁵⁹

\$1.1 billionTotal tax cuts since 2012



\$535 million

Cost of 2022 tax costs

Source: Economic Policy Institute

Meanwhile, the tax cut would cost the state approximately \$535 million annually once fully phased in.⁶⁰ This lost revenue would add to the more than 50 tax cuts totaling \$577 million since 2012 that have mostly benefited Mississippi's wealthiest individuals and corporations.⁶¹ State leaders used the current revenue surplus as justification for providing this tax break for the wealthy, and because of the surplus, eliminating the state income tax remains one of Governor Tate Reeves' top policy priorities.

Arbitrary limits and poor decisions about which federal aid programs Mississippi accepts, like in the case of federal disaster relief, or rejects, like federal funds to expand Medicaid, impede economic progress by restricting state revenue and deter opportunities to create a better future for all Mississippians. As such, many of the policy decisions made by state leaders have kept Mississippians in poverty, without accessible, affordable healthcare, with underfunded schools, with crumbling infrastructure, with widening disparities, and increasing wealth gaps.

CONCLUSION

An inclusive economy that benefits all of us is possible. We have the resources available to invest in public services so that everyone thrives. Federal lawmakers have committed to historic investments in Mississippians and our communities. Now it is up to state leaders to utilize all of the resources available to them and enact their own investments in order to ensure a better future Mississippi.

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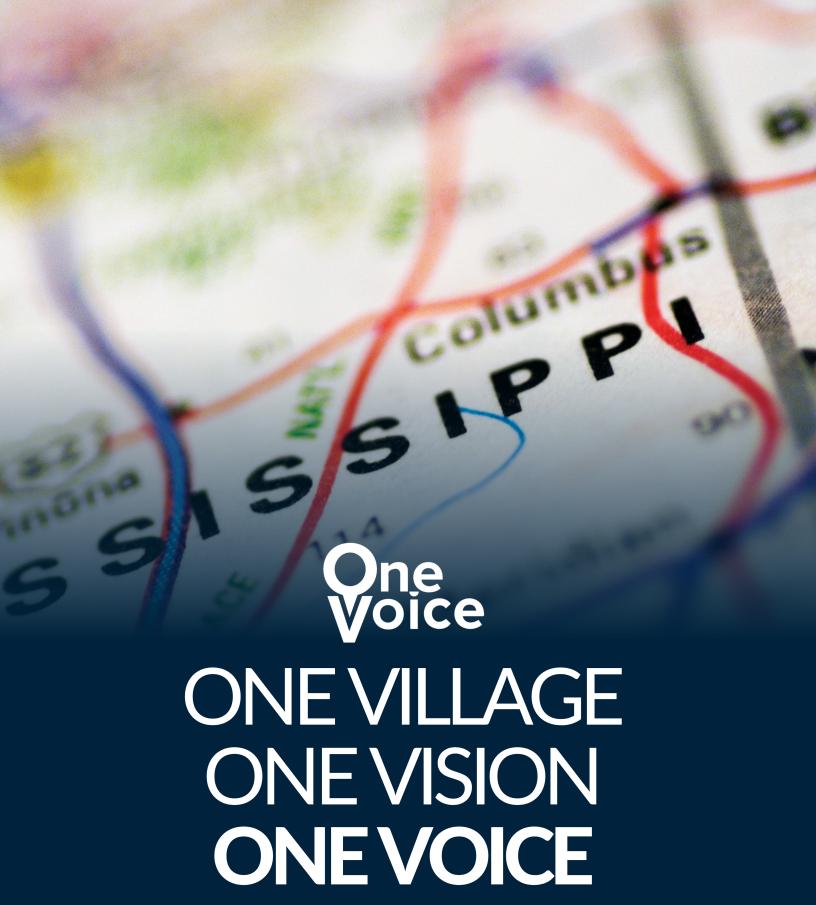
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57 Id.

58 ld.

59 Id.

60 ld.



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