

LAND, WATER AND TIMBER RESOURCES BOARD

In 2000, the Legislature created the Mississippi Land, Water and Timber Resources Board to assist the Mississippi agricultural industry in the development, marketing and distribution of agricultural products. The president of MFBF, or his designee, are required to sit on the board. This year, the Legislature appropriated \$2.5 million to the board for the 2023 fiscal year.

TAX RELIEF ACT OF 2022

The Tax Relief Act of 2022 was first presented as an effort to repeal individual income tax in the state of Mississippi, without losing revenue to the general fund. When the business community and public policy experts pushed back against these efforts, the bill was changed to lessen the income tax burden on individuals without raising other taxes. Once fully implemented, the bill will phase out the 4% tax bracket. Thanks to the hard work of MFBF, Mississippi's farmers and ranchers were excluded from paying higher taxes in this piece of legislation.

REDISTRICTING

Every 10 years, members of the Legislature are required to review legislative districts after a U.S. Census is completed. According to shifts in population, districts can be redrawn to reflect the population changes. The fast-growing areas in Desoto, Madison and Rankin counties saw significant changes, while other areas of the state lost population. Because of this, the Legislature redrew its legislative districts, as well as the state's congressional districts. To view approved maps for state and federal districts, visit www.msjsc.state.ms.us.

100TH RESOLUTION

In celebration of MFBF's 100th anniversary, the Senate passed Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 550 to recognize the organization. The concurrent resolution commemorated the history of MFBF and the contribution MFBF has made to agriculture in Mississippi. The resolution was presented to MFBF President Mike McCormick, was forwarded to Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson, and was made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

CONCLUSION

Now, our focus shifts to the 2023 Mississippi Legislative Session that will convene on Tuesday, January 3, 2023. This will be the final year in this current term. The qualifying deadline for legislative races, county positions and all statewide elected positions is March 1, 2023. Rest assured, MFBF will continue to work on behalf of your needs!

THANK YOU

MFBF would like to give a special thank you to Speaker Philip Gunn, Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann and their staffs for their friendliness toward agricultural issues and their advocacy in getting these important issues across the finish line. Additionally, we appreciate Gov. Tate Reeves and his staffs' leadership and commitment to farmers, ranchers and rural Mississippians. As the largest general farm organization in the state, we get to work with multiple agriculture organizations, and we appreciate their teamwork throughout the 2022 session. Thank you to the Mississippi Cattlemen's Association; Delta Council; Mississippi Forestry Association; Mississippi Poultry Association; and the Mississippi Loggers Association. Finally, the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the House and Senate Agriculture committees were always open to hear Farm Bureau's concerns and handled many important agriculture issues. Thank you to Senate Chairman Chuck Younger of Lowndes County and Vice Chairman Tyler McCaughn of Newton County, and House Chairman Bill Pigott of Walthall County and Vice Chairman Vince Mangold of Lincoln County.

2022 LEGISLATIVE RECAP



MISSISSIPPI FARM BUREAU® FEDERATION

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE



The 2022 Mississippi Legislative Session adjourned sine die on Tuesday, April 5. In the third year of the current four-year term, legislators extended the 90-day session by two days to complete the necessary tasks and responsibilities. Members of the Senate and House of Representatives passed legislation during this session that will play a significant role in the lives of farmers, ranchers and rural Mississippians in the future.

Throughout the session, Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation staff worked hard on behalf of our membership. MFBF protected the private property rights of Mississippians by codifying eminent domain, supported efforts to provide rural Mississippians with high speed internet, and worked with the Mississippi Legislature to extend the honey labeling law.

In addition, MFBF staff continued building relationships with legislators and educating them on the importance of agriculture in Mississippi to ensure legislation did not have negative impacts on agriculture.

Below are some highlights from the 2022 Mississippi Legislative Session. For additional information concerning all of these topics, visit www.msfb.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Mike McCormick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Mike McCormick
President

EMINENT DOMAIN

In the 2005 Kelo V. New London (CT) case, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that private economic development qualified as a public use, giving local governments the authority to take private property and transfer it to other private entities unless state laws prevented it. Following this ruling, MFBF began pushing for legislation that would prevent this from happening in Mississippi. MFBF sponsored and led the two-year Initiative and Referendum Campaign that resulted in Initiative 31 passing during the November 2011 General Election.

In May 2021, the Mississippi Supreme Court overturned the medical marijuana initiative overwhelmingly approved by voters in November 2020. They did this due to a discrepancy in the initiative process. Initiative process language dictated that the number of registered voter signatures needed to place an issue on the ballot should be gathered equally from Mississippi’s five congressional districts as they existed in the 1990s. After the 2000 U.S. Census was released, Mississippi lost one of its five congressional districts. Because of this, the initiative process was ruled invalid.

Leading up to the 2022 Mississippi Legislative Session, MFBF educated state leadership and legislative members on the imperative need to codify the Initiative 31 language in the Mississippi Constitution. After some early opposition and misinformation, MFBF’s unwavering commitment to protect the private property rights of Mississippians prevailed. On April 19, Gov. Tate Reeves signed House Bill 1769, codifying the eminent domain constitutional amendment into general law.

INITIATIVE PROCESS

As previously mentioned, the Mississippi Supreme Court ruled the state initiative process invalid in May 2021. With this ruling, the Legislature rejected the old means of adding language to the state constitution in favor of codifying statutory language. This issue garnered much conversation before the 2022 Mississippi Legislative Session, however, an agreement could not be reached on the details, and the Legislature did not provide any avenue for referendum.

MEDICAL MARIJUANA

The Legislature passed the Medical Cannabis Act, establishing a medical marijuana program similar to those established in 36 other states. Mississippi’s law is among the most constrictive in the country, only allowing for 3.5 grams a day and 3 ounces a month. The Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) and Mississippi Department of Revenue (DOR) will run the program, with the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) assisting on seed inspection and plant health.

LAND GRANT INSTITUTIONS

The state’s land grant institutions, Mississippi State University and Alcorn State University, received significant increases in their separately budgeted agriculture units that service a large portion of Mississippians through many programs.

- Alcorn State Agriculture Units – 6.79% for Poultry Sciences Academic Research Center
- Mississippi State Agriculture and Forestry Experiment Station – 5.25%
- Mississippi State Extension – 5.42%
- Mississippi State Forest and Wildlife Research Center – 5.31%
- Mississippi State College of Veterinary Medicine – 5.58% for testing, programming and personnel-related expenses for Chronic Waste Disease

INFRASTRUCTURE

In 2018, the Legislature created the Emergency Road and Bridge Repair Fund (ERBRF), which supports Mississippi’s infrastructure. In the 2022 Mississippi Legislative Session, the Legislature subsequently provided a \$100 million round of ERBRF funding. This round of funding is for application by cities and counties, not the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT). In addition to that, the Legislature earmarked \$89 million of Highway Infrastructure Program funds received by MDOT, pursuant to the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 (CRRSA).

Senate Highways and Transportation Committee Chairwoman Jenifer Branning of Neshoba County was a champion for this legislation, and we appreciate her efforts for rural Mississippi.

HONEY LABELING LAW

The MFBF Public Policy Department also worked to make Mississippi state law more closely reflect MFBF policy related to honey labeling. It revised the definition of commercial honey to reflect that any product consisting of honey and sweetener shall include all ingredients on the label. The law also mandated that any lab-grown honey shall not be labeled as honey. With the passage of Senate Bill 2007, Mississippi has law that reflects our policy and can be enforced by MDAC.

RURAL BROADBAND

The Legislature passed the Mississippi Broadband Accessibility Act this session. The legislation established an Office of Broadband Expansion and Accessibility of Mississippi under the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration (DFA). The office will review applications for funding broadband infrastructure projects using federal and state funds. Additionally, the office shall consider certain factors in making its determinations and awards, such as need and location. This legislation is extremely important to MFBF, because a centralized office and board of directors will ensure rural Mississippi and underserved areas of the state do not get pushed aside for broadband accessibility.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT

One of the final acts of the 2022 Mississippi Legislative Session was passing the 2023 Fiscal Year budget. Mississippi received \$1.8 billion from the federal Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) as a part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). These funds were sent to municipal, state and tribal governments across the U.S. as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the needs that arose from it. Of the funds distributed to Mississippi, \$1.5 billion has been appropriated and \$295 million remains to be distributed prior to December 31, 2024. Legislative leaders are already in discussions on ways to effectively spend the remaining funds and any funds that lapse.

TEACHER PAY

This year, the Legislature passed the largest teacher pay raise in state history. This puts us closer to our peer teacher salaries across the Southeastern U.S. The distribution of this pay raise gave a larger portion to starting teachers to attract more talent to the state, while still retaining teachers with tenure.