

# Welfare fraud is there if you look

Welfare fraud, in both Medicaid and SNAP/food stamps, is an ongoing problem that drains necessary resources from our neediest citizens. Mississippi currently has an \$89 million deficit fueled by enrollment increases (up by 1,412 to 779,298 in the last year alone) and rising medical costs. In short, more people are signing up and the cost to cover each recipient is increasing. While the vast majority of those on welfare are eligible to receive services, some are not. We estimate this number to be around 10 percent, based on the experience of other states. Given that the current social safety net is under financial pressure, it makes sense to look for savings by cutting fraud and removing ineligible recipients, some of whom either don't live in Mississippi or are using a false identity to collect benefits.

Even this modest reform, however, is being questioned by those who claim that if the price of catching 100 cases of fraud results in the removal of just

1 eligible recipient we should instead tolerate the fraud. Tell that to the 8,000 Mississippians with disabilities and other serious needs currently on a waiting list for Medicaid's Home and Community Based Services. Tell that to eligible Medicaid recipients who can't find a dentist or who have to wait months to see a doctor. As former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder put it, "I don't think people necessarily thought that something as well intentioned as Medicare and Medicaid would necessarily attract fraudsters. But I think we have to understand that it certainly has."

For this reason, a number of states have started to proactively audit their welfare rolls using verification procedures like those called for in HB 1090, a bill pending the Mississippi legislature. These states (of all political stripes, I might add) include: Alaska, Arkansas, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Wyoming. Critics of HB

1090 contend that evidence of fraud in these states does not mean we will find fraud in Mississippi. This is wishful thinking. If current fraud detection rates are low, it is because our agencies are not using all the tools available for identifying fraud.

Consider Massachusetts' experience in combating welfare fraud. In fiscal year 2015, they identified \$13.7 million in food stamp fraud, "a 44 percent increase over the previous year's record of \$9.5 million and the fifth straight year of record-setting findings." The state's auditor attributed the increase in fraud detection to be the result of using better systems and technology, noting that "the increased findings of fraud do not

necessarily indicate more fraud in these programs, but is reflective of greater effectiveness by the agency in identifying fraudulent behavior."

We all embrace technological innovation when it comes to medicine: for instance, new tests or procedures that make it easier to detect cancer or diabetes. We embrace technology that makes it easier to secure our homes, cars and businesses. Should not we do the same when it comes to securing the integrity of our welfare programs?

Eliminating welfare fraud is not a right or left issue. It is not a conservative or liberal issue. It is a commonsense issue. Whatever party you belong to, encourage your state lawmaker to vote for HB 1090.



## Letter to the Editor

The bridge coming into Lexington from Howard Road has been closed since November 2016.

The detour is Ferguson Road that is covered with gravel and mud.

If it rains the road becomes difficult to travel. The bridge closing is dangerous for all emergency vehicles, because of the travel time.

(My question is) Whose job is it (to reopen the bridge)?

*Dr. Jameson Taylor is vice president for policy at the Mississippi Center for Public Policy and can be reached at [taylor@mspolicy.org](mailto:taylor@mspolicy.org) by email.*

Sincerely,  
Rose Gamble  
A Concerned Citizen  
Lexington

## Card Of Thanks

I would like to thank everyone for the many acts of kindness shown to me on my retirement. The calls, cards, gifts and words of encouragement are so greatly appreciated. Your love and friendship will be cherished forever. Again thank you and continue to pray for me as I enter this next stage in my life.

George Ellison

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DEADLINE:  
4 p.m. FRIDAY

### MAYOR'S HEALTH COUNCIL SET TO MEET

The Lexington Mayor's Health Council is set for Thursday, March 23 at 10 a.m. at the Lexington Multi-Purpose Complex. 3-16,23

### PASTOR ANNIVERSARY SET AT HOLLY GROVE

Holly Grove M.B. Church will celebrate its Pastor and Wife's 24th Year Anniversary on Sunday, March 26 at 3:00 p.m. 3-16,23

### CAN YOU DANCE? TEACH A CLASS!

Do All Things Children's Cir-

cle, Inc. in Lexington is seeking dance instructors for upcoming summer children's programs for Tap, Ballroom and Creative Dancing. Use your God given talent to inspire children. Teach! Call Ms. Knight at 601-660-2207. 3-16,23

### PARENT BOOT CAMP SET FOR MONTH OF MARCH

William Dean Jr. Elementary School will be hosting a series of Parent Boot Camps throughout the month of March from 5 to 7 p.m. in preparation for Mississippi Statewide Assessments (MAP/MKAS2). The dates are as follows: 3rd grade, March 21; Kindergarten, March 23; 4th-5th grades, March 28; and

2nd grade, March 30. 3-16,23 4 p.m. 3-23

### FAMILY AND FRIENDS DAY SET AT ST. JOSEPH

St. Joseph C.O.G.I.C. in West will host the Lewis and Keys Family and Friends Day Program on Sunday, March 26 at 11 a.m. 3-16,23

### HOLMES CHAMBER TO HOST EASTER EGG HUNT

The Holmes County Chamber of Commerce will host an Easter Egg hunt on the grounds around the Lexington Public Library on Saturday, April 8 at 1 p.m. The event is set for children ages 3 through 10 only. Bring your own basket! Parents bring your camera! 3-16,23

### SPRING REVIVAL SET AT UNION GROVE M.B.C.

Union Grove M.B. Church will host its Spring Revival beginning Wednesday, April 5 through Friday, April 7 at 7 nightly. 3-23,30

### MUSICIANS TO BE HONORED AT G.F.M.B.C.

Greater Fairview M.B.C. in Pickens will a musician appreciation on Sunday, March 26 at

### APRIL REVIVAL SET AT GREATER FAIRVIEW

Greater Fairview M.B.C. will hold revival services from Monday April 3 through Wednesday, April 5 at 7:15 nightly. 3-23,30

### ANNIVERSARY SET AT NEW BEGINNING

New Beginning Church in Durant will celebrate its 5th Year Anniversary on Sunday, April 2 at 3 p.m. All performance groups are welcome. Refreshments will be served. 3-23,30

### NAZARETH CELEBRATES 100TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Greater Nazareth M.B. Church in Tchula will celebrate its 100th year church anniversary on Sunday, March 26 at 2 p.m. 3-23

### APPRECIATION SERVICE SET AT WEST GROVE

West Grove M.B. Church in Lexington will host its Pastor and Wife's 7th Year Anniversary Service on Sunday, March 26 at 2:30 p.m. 3-23

## MEET THE CANDIDATES

The board members of the Durant Freedom Democratic Party will sponsor a Meet the Candidates forum April 3, 2017 at the Walter Bruce Improvement Center on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive in Durant, MS. All candidates who will be running in the Primary Election in Holmes County on May 2 are invited to participate. For more information please contact **Charlie Mae Campbell at (662) 931-3030** or **Robert Bowers (662) 653-3807**. Citizens please come out and be informed of the goals and objectives of each candidate. The program will begin at 7:30 p.m. Refreshments will be served.

# Peoples Drug Store

-on the square, Lexington-

834-2721

# Spring Open House

# Trunk Show for:

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LoveAO

April 7 • 12-4 p.m.

Free Gifts • Light Refreshments

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Tuesday, April 4

Lexington 2:45-3:30 @

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and

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JOHN DEERE TOYS AND SELECT SECTIONS

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