

**HERALD
BRIEF**

A rundown of the poorest counties
By USA Today

The typical U.S. household earned \$55,322 in 2016, an increase of \$1,433 from the year prior. While income in the United States is increasing overall, so is income inequality. The typical household in the wealthiest county earned \$2,219 more in 2016 than in 2015, and the typical household in the poorest county earned \$356 less.

Incomes vary across counties within a state, and even the wealthier states have relatively poor counties. Factors such as educational attainment, unemployment, and industrial composition affect income differences between counties. Often, the poorest counties tend to have a population with lower educational attainment, higher unemployment, or job opportunities in mostly lower-paying industries.

To determine the poorest county in every state, 24/7 Wall St. reviewed data on median household income for every U.S. county with at least 10,000 residents with data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

Once a leading producer of cotton, Holmes County experienced substantial economic and population decline throughout the second half of the 20th century and has yet to fully recover from the loss of its primary industry.

Today, Holmes County is home to 18,547 residents, less than half of the county's peak population of 39,710 in 1920. The typical Holmes County household earns just \$20,800 a year, nearly half of the median household income for Mississippi as a whole of \$40,528 and the third least of any U.S. county with at least 10,000 residents.

Some 45.0% of Holmes County residents live in poverty — the third largest share of any county and nearly three times the 15% national poverty rate.

Mississippi Senate plan steps back from Medicaid changes

Associated Press

A key state senator is backing off plans to change Mississippi's state-federal Medicaid program.

The Senate Medicaid Committee on Monday advanced a version of Senate Bill 2836 removing earlier proposals to cut payments to health care providers and require all Medicaid spending to be administered by managed care companies. It goes to the Senate for more debate.

Senate Medicaid Committee Chairman Brice Wiggins,

a Pascagoula Republican, said he wants to study those proposals, saying health care providers object. For example, nursing home owners don't want to get Medicaid money through managed care, instead of the traditional fee-for-service billing method.

Wiggins told reporters that feedback from those who provide Medicaid services is "We want to be paid, as opposed to control costs."

House Medicaid Committee Chairman Chris Brown,

a Nettleton Republican, said his committee will make its own proposal Tuesday, hours before a deadline. Brown, like Wiggins, said he won't try to force more of the program into managed care. He said he might propose "a few things" to mandate cost reductions.

Mississippi's Medicaid program covers one-fourth of the state's population, including people in nursing homes, disabled adults, pregnant women and young children. The program is project-

ed to spend \$945 million in state money and more than \$5 billion in federal money this year.

Lawmakers must vote on reauthorizing the program this year or parts will legally expire.

Neither chairman is supporting an effort by Mississippi hospitals to mandate that some of the Medicaid program be run through a hospital-sponsored provider care organization. The state Medicaid agency rejected a bid from hospitals to get a share of Medicaid business last year. Brown said he's open to requiring that a provider organization be includ-

ed, but said he doesn't want to award it to the existing hospital group without a bid.

Neither Brown nor Wiggins say they intend to direct Mississippi Medicaid to apply for waivers from existing federal rules, and they plan no legislative ruling on Gov. Phil Bryant's plan to have the Department of Human Services determine who's eligible for Medicaid. With the governor's backing, Medicaid is currently asking federal authorities to allow it to require adult caregivers to work to remain eligible for health coverage.

Wiggins' plan would (Continued on page 3.)



Mississippi's First Lady, Deborah Bryant, wife of Governor Phil Bryant, made a visit to students and staff at Williams-Sullivan Elementary School in Holmes County on Thursday, January 18. Bryant is visiting schools in all 82 counties of the state promoting literacy in students. Bryant read to students and visited with school staff. Bryant plans to visit each of Mississippi's 82 counties this year as part of her "Read Across Mississippi" campaign. Since Bryant started "Read Across Mississippi" back in 2014, the number of third graders that can read on a third grade level has jumped from 55 to 90 percent. (Courtesy Photos)

Bulldogs' teams over power Lions, Lady Lions

HCC Communications

The Holmes Community College Bulldogs capped off the first half of the North Division schedule with a win over the East Mississippi Community College Lions, 71-66, in Goodman, Monday night, January 29.

With the win, the Bulldogs improve to 15-2 overall and 5-1 in the North Division. Holmes hosts Itawamba tonight, February 1, in Goodman at 8 p.m.

East Mississippi jumped out early on the Bulldogs and held a 17-8 lead in the

first half before the Bulldogs came back to take a 33-30 lead at halftime. Holmes outscored East Mississippi in the second half 38-36 for the win.

Javon Franklin led the Bulldogs in scoring with 20 points while Trevais Spencer had 16 and Kassim Nicholson had 13. Franklin led in rebounds with 13 while (Continued on page 8.)

'Blues, Boots and BBQ' set for arts council fundraiser

Staff Reports

The Holmes County Arts Council will hold its annual fund-raising gala on the evening of Friday, February 23.

The theme for this year's gala is "Blues, Boots and BBQ."

Social hour and silent auction will be held from 6:00 - 7:00 p.m. Dinner will be served at 7:00 p.m.

Entertainment will begin at 8:00 and go until, featuring musical selections by The Village Band.

Tickets are \$50 (donation) and may be purchased by calling 601-927-5155.

The gala is the one fund rais-

er for the Arts Council each year. The funds will go to the maintenance of the building located on the Court Square in Lexington and featured programs held throughout the year, such as "Amahl" performed by the Jackson Opera in December and other events throughout the year including New Stage productions for children; country, bluegrass music and art classes.

The Holmes County Arts Council was started in 2000-2001 by interested and dedicated citizens to bring enrichment events to all of Holmes County and the surrounding communities.

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