

IN AND AROUND  
**LEXINGTON**  
BY LEONA (LENA) FIELDS



The Archer sisters have our fun person on the bus we their niece visiting them for ride to and from the site. the summer. She has been Mr. Cornelius “Jim” coming for quite a few years. Kitchens funeral was held Mrs. Annie Sago is sick. Saturday, at Mt. Calvary We miss her at the Senior MB Church in Tchula. Citizen’s feeding site. She is Mrs. Coraine Torry passed

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away on Wednesday morn- ing, July 17. Funeral ar- rangements are incomplete as of press time. Her daugh- ter Janell Brown was at home from Atlanta visiting her when she passed away. Her granddaughter Trice lives here in Lexington. Keep Janell and Trice up- lifted in prayer.

Durene Benson’s husband passed recently. I don’t know her married name but please uplift the Benson

**\*Auditor Report**  
(Continued from page 1.)

- Did not certify whether multiple childcare centers met health and safety stan- dards;
- Did not monitor recipients of several grants to determine whether grant money was spent in accordance with the law;
- Did not compile basic, required documents, like a comprehensive list of grant recipients;
- Did not follow federal reporting guidelines, submit- ting some federal paperwork nearly two years late;
- Did not follow all legal re- quirements for ensuring be- neficiaries of large programs like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) were actually eligible for the programs;
- And did not or could not ensure childcare centers re- ceiving CCDF funds accu- rately counted children in the centers.

Several of these DHS find- ings have been repeatedly identified by the Auditor’s office since 2014 with no cor- rective action completed.

Findings listed in the Single Audit Report can affect the amount of federal funding Mississippi receives.

Mississippi Prison Indus- tries Corporation, a non- profit created by the state to provide work programs for inmates, also drew serious findings. After a cash short- age and subsequent manage- ment change, the accounting office at Prison Industries has experienced a staff short- age. Without necessary staff- ing levels, job duties have not been properly separated. When too few employees have too much control over the finances of an office, the risk for fraud and theft in- creases.

Several state agencies have also created fraud risk by the way they utilize the software designed to manage payroll and purchasing. The State- wide Payroll and Human Re- sources System (SPAHRS) is the program used by the state to keep track of agency employees and their pay. If employees have too much individual control over an agency’s files on SPAHRS, the agency could be at risk for fraud. For instance, an employee with a great deal

family, the Hester family and Durene in prayer.

Due to a funeral at the Multi-Purpose Complex, Friday, July 19, it was not open to the Senior Citizen’s feeding program and the farmer’s market. The farm- er’s market was open on Thursday.

Congratulations to Morris Morgan and his family. They are back in their own home after losing a trailer and a house to a fire.

of control could create “ghost employees” to secretly fun- nel money to themselves. Auditor White recommended some agencies limit unneces- sary access to SPAHRS and separate responsibility for re- cording entries in the system among multiple employees to prevent this situation.

Auditor White made similar recommendations regarding Mississippi’s Accountability System for Government In- formation and Collaboration (MAGIC), the accounting and procurement software for the state.

Finally, auditors noted the overall level of expertise among accounting staff in multiple state agencies was insufficient. The State Au- ditor’s office recommends the Department of Finance and Administration continue training programs for ac- counting personnel in all state agencies.

The full 300-page report can be viewed online at [www.osa.ms.gov](http://www.osa.ms.gov) under the “Re- ports” tab.

“My hope is that the agen- cies with the findings listed in the audit report will take swift action to remedy the prob- lems we highlighted,” White said. “The taxpayers deserve to know that money is being spent appropriately, in ac- cordance with the law, and that the proper safeguards to pre- vent fraud are in place.”

**Teacher pay raise will cost \$18.5M more than first estimated**

**Associated Press**  
The Mississippi Depart- ment of Education an- nounced Monday, July 22, that a \$1,500 raise for teach- ers will cost \$18.5 million more than it originally in- formed lawmakers, months after local superintendents discovered a shortfall caused by the department’s igno- rance of how teachers were classified in its own comput- er system.

Lawmakers allotted \$58 million for the raise that be- gan July 1, based on a total of 31,000 teachers and assistant teachers. But the department didn’t count almost 10,000 other teaching positions that officials thought were feder- ally funded, meaning federal funds would cover the cost of the raises. Instead, it turns out those positions are state- funded, and Mississippi must absorb another \$18.5 million in costs, bringing the overall price of the increase in pay and associated ben- efits for 40,991 educators to \$77 million.

In March, the department sent a letter to lawmakers counting 31,157 teachers. Officials said that was a count of teachers in its com- puter system classified as being paid only with funds from the Mississippi Ade- quate Education Program, the formula that divides state aid among school districts. But state Superintendent Carey Wright later said the department didn’t know that its computer system places some teachers paid all or in part with state money into classifications that the de- partment thought included only teachers paid com- pletely with federal money. The department now says it worked with districts to identify all state-funded po- sitions.

The Legislature mandat- ed a pay increase in law, so local districts must pay it regardless of state fund- ing.

The Department of Educa- tion said it is working with lawmakers to make up the deficit when the Legisla- ture reconvenes in January after state elections. Some people pushed for a specia session to solve the problem immediately. But outgoing Gov. Phil Bryant and oth- ers rejected that move as a waste of money. Because it’s an election year, there’s no guarantee of who will hold top posts in January, but many current and prospec- tive leaders have pledged to cover the shortfall.

House Education Com- mittee Chairman Richard Bennett, a Long Beach Re- publican, released a letter Monday pledging the sup- port of House Republicans.

“The House leadership is supportive of funding this deficit and ensuring that the school districts will not be required to absorb any costs associated with the pay raise,” Bennett wrote.

The department usually sends state aid to local school districts in two checks a year. Wright has said the depart- ment won’t split the \$58 mil- lion in pay raise funds equal- ly, but will send a larger share this summer, providing enough money to pay for the raise until lawmakers return.

Not only teachers and as- sistants, but counselors, li- brarians and other special- ized workers are getting the raise.

“This is the most compre- hensive pay raise the Leg- islature has approved and is intended to provide Missis- sippi educators with a well- deserved raise,” Wright said in a statement.

