

# Executive director retires from Mississippi Arts Commission

## Press Release

After nearly 15 years of public service to the state of Mississippi, Malcolm White will retire as executive director of the Mississippi Arts Commission on September 30, 2020. His career in public service has included two stints as executive director of the Mississippi Arts Commission as well as several years serving as director of Visit Mississippi. White is perhaps best known for his role in the hospitality industry as owner of the popular Hal & Mal's restaurant and founding special events throughout the state such as Hal's St. Paddy's Parade.

White began his career in public service as the executive director of the Mississippi Arts Commission in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, administering recovery programs to artists and arts organizations impacted by the storm. He also promoted the arts as an economic driver, means of community transformation and powerful educational tool. He remained with the agency until 2012, when he became director of Visit Mississippi, which is Mississippi Development Authority's tourism division.

While there, White developed and implemented plans

to create economic growth and opportunities through tourism, the creative economy and promoted the state as a travel destination and film location. Returning to MAC as executive director in 2016, White continued the work of his previous stint at the agency and oversaw a digitization of the agency's grant process, the creation of the Mississippi Writers Trail and a re-envisioning of the agency's signature arts education program Mississippi Whole Schools.

"After twelve years at MAC, and three years at Visit Mississippi, I am ready to step out of public service and back into the private world," said Malcolm White, executive director of MAC. "I'm grateful to have followed in my father's footsteps and for the opportunity to serve my fellow citizens. I have had the chance to put forth a few big ideas and share my sanguine notions, intended to improve our quality of life, our view of ourselves and the road ahead. But most of all, I am proud to have represented the greatest asset our state possesses, and that is our story; the arts, culture and our unparalleled creative spirit.

"Malcolm brought a unique set of skills to the

Arts Commission," said Carol Puckett, board chair of the Mississippi Arts Commission. "His background as a successful entrepreneur and trendsetting cultural leader transformed and energized the work of the agency. He is well-known for his big ideas, passion for the arts in all forms and advocacy of small towns and out-of-the way places. The arts in Mississippi are better, healthier and more visible because of his leadership."

Throughout White's career, he has been a member of and served on the committees of numerous civic organizations. White is involved with South Arts, the Mississippi Blues and Country Music Trails, Downtown Jackson Partners and he is past chairman of the Mississippi Blues Commission. He has published two books: Little Stories: A Collection of Mississippi Photos, a book of images he created from visits covering the state over several years and The Artful Evolution of Hal & Mal's, a collaboration with artist Ginger Williams Cook and memoir of "the most talked about upscale honky-tonk in Mississippi."

The Mississippi Arts Commission has launched a search for a new executive director to lead the state agency. Details of the position requirements as well as application information can be found at [arts.ms.gov/work-for-mac](http://arts.ms.gov/work-for-mac). The deadline to apply for this position is July 31.

For more information on MAC's grants programs and other services, visit the agency's website at [arts.ms.gov](http://arts.ms.gov).

## THE WICKER REPORT

By: United States Senator Roger Wicker



### Wicker works to rebuild and modernize the military Mississippi Plays Key Role in Building a 21st-Century Force

This summer, the Senate will move to pass the National Defense Authorization Act for the 60th year in a row. This annual legislation authorizes military spending to meet the needs expressed by our top military leaders. As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I worked to craft core elements of this legislation and hope it will pass soon.

The Senate bill would give our military momentum as it continues to grow and modernize. It would keep military manufacturing companies on a reliable production schedule despite the disruptions of the COVID-19 crisis. And it would provide new support to military families who sacrifice every day alongside their loved ones in uniform.

#### Mississippi's Role in Rebuilding the Military

The U.S. Navy needs more vessels to meet the growing threat from China and other adversaries. Mississippi shipbuilders play a critical role in keeping our Navy well-supplied. This year's defense bill would approve two submarines, two destroyers, two rescue ships, and a frigate for the Navy. It would also allow the military to purchase four amphibious assault ships to be built in Mississippi. In addition, the Navy recently announced

plans to build a destroyer in Pascagoula. These projects would bring our Navy closer to the total of 355 ships required by the SHIPS Act, a law I authored in 2017.

This legislation would also help businesses, large and small, across America that are struggling amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Our shipbuilding and aircraft industries rely on supply companies that support hundreds of thousands of jobs. This legislation would authorize funds to help protect these jobs during a time of economic distress.

#### More Americans in Uniform

In addition to providing equipment, the Senate bill would boost active-duty service numbers for the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Under the legislation, the Army would grow by 5,000 soldiers to reach a force of 485,000, the Navy would grow by 6,200 sailors to reach 346,730, and the Air Force would add 675 airmen to reach a total of 333,475.

The Senate also included my amendment to expand Junior ROTC programs to more high schools across America. This is the result of an initiative of mine two years ago. In 2018, I introduced the JROTC Act to support more JROTC units

and help schools in rural and underserved areas participate. The passage of that legislation led to funding for roughly 150 new units. This year's legislation sets the goal of having at least 3,700 units nationwide.

JROTC is a powerful tool for building character and skill in our high school students. Statistics show that compared to their peers, young cadets have better grades, lower dropout rates and higher rates of graduation and admission to college. I have met with JROTC cadets from across Mississippi and will continue supporting this remarkable program.

#### Supporting Military Families

Military families know that serving in the Armed Forces is truly a family endeavor. As an Air Force veteran and the father of an Air Force officer, I understand the unique hardships our military families face.

The Senate legislation includes measures to help our military families. It would provide a three percent pay raise for all troops and would improve services for military children with special needs. It would also help military spouses gain employment in licensed professions. Additionally, I worked to include a provision making National Guardsmen and Reservists eligible for housing at the Armed Forces Retirement Home in Gulfport.

As Congress finalizes this legislation, I am mindful of the support we owe to the men and women who keep us safe. This bill would make good on that debt.

# 'It sucks': Coronavirus outbreak at Capitol leaves state government in limbo

## Mississippi Today

When COVID-19 kicked into full force, state Rep. Trey Lamar said the aches "felt like somebody took a nine-iron to my back."

Lamar is among dozens of Mississippi legislators and staff infected in a coronavirus outbreak at the state Capitol as lawmakers ended, for now, their 2020 legislative session. Many lawmakers by the end of the session on July 1 were eschewing face masks and social distancing, and the Capitol at times was packed with people as lawmakers voted to retire the state flag with its divisive Confederate emblem.

With unfinished business, including dealing with the governor's veto of the state public education budget, the legislative outbreak has state government in limbo.

The Capitol is shut down, and health officials warn lawmakers shouldn't gather again for at least a couple of weeks.

Both Speaker of the House Philip Gunn and Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann, who presides over the Senate, have tested positive. A spokesperson for the Republican speaker, who announced his test results on July 5, said earlier this week that Gunn is "doing great." He is slated to give online interviews later this week in his capacity as the chair of the American Legislative Exchange Council, a national organization that promotes conservative ideas and legislation.

A spokesperson for Hosemann said: "There has been little change (in his condition), and the lieutenant governor remains in quarantine

and working from home." Hosemann confirmed his positive test on July 7.

The state health officer on Tuesday said 41 people — staff and legislators — have tested positive so far, including 30 legislators. Dobbs said there have been two hospitalizations associated with the Capitol outbreak.

Lamar said he's heard even higher numbers of potential cases.

Lamar, the 39-year-old House Ways and Means chairman from Senatobia, was succinct in how he felt starting the evening of July 4, when he first fell ill.

"It sucks," Lamar said on Tuesday. "It's definitely nothing to take lightly.

"On the night of July 4, I started feeling bad, and had two to three days of flu-like symptoms — aches, fever,

chills ... then I started having a dry cough, where I couldn't catch my breath ... I lost my sense of smell and taste."

Lamar said he began feeling better starting Sunday afternoon, and by Tuesday was definitely on the mend. He said he wasn't hospitalized — although he knows of at least one lawmaker who has been — and none of his family has come down with it.

"They put me in a guest bedroom and locked me in isolation," Lamar said.

As lawmakers and legislative staff recover, additional work looms. The Legislature left Jackson without passing a budget for the Department of Marine Resources because of a power struggle over spending federal Gulf Restoration funds. And the governor vetoed the bulk of the state's

public education budget after lawmakers failed to specifically fund a bonus system for top performing teachers he supports.

Gov. Tate Reeves on Tuesday, July 14, said the executive branch has been able to fund both agencies in the meantime. He said the situation is "fluid," and he is reluctant to call lawmakers back into special session to

deal with the issues until the health threat is minimized.

"Public health must trump everything else," Reeves said. "... Is it an ideal situation? No. Is it perfect? No. Should the Legislature have left without finishing these things? No. I am confident that working together we can find a solution."

Reeves added: "I am not going to put them in harm's way."

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