

Governor Tate Reeves announces additional COVID-19 vaccine measures

Press Release

On Monday, January 4, Governor Tate Reeves announced the decision to allow vulnerable Mississippians to have access sooner than expected to the COVID-19 vaccine. Next week, individuals 75 and older will

have availability to the vaccine. The following week, Mississippians 65 and older will have the next available access.

Executive order 1535 is still in effect until 5pm January 15th, 2021.

The following counties

are currently under a county wide mask mandates after meeting the certain requirements in relation to COVID-19:

- Adams, Alcorn, Amite, Attala, Benton, Bolivar, Calhoun, Carroll, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Clarke, Clay, Co-

ahoma, Copiah, Covington, De Soto, Forrest, Franklin, George, Greene, Grenada, Hancock, Harrison, Hinds, Holmes, Humphreys, Itawamba, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Jones, Kemper, Lafayette, Lamar, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Leake, Lee, Leflore, Lincoln, Lowndes, Madison, Marion, Marshall, Mon-

roe, Montgomery, Neshoba, Newton, Noxubee, Oktibeha, Panola, Pearl River, Perry, Pike, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Quitman, Rankin, Scott, Simpson, Smith, Stone, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tippah, Tishomingo, Union, Walthall, Warren, Washington, Wayne, Webster, Wilkinson, Winston, Yazoo and Yazoo Counties.

As of now, 78 of Mississippi's 82 counties are under mask mandates.

"The most important task that we have is getting the vaccine out to the public. That is our only way out of all this," Governor Tate Reeves said. "I still believe everyone should continue to take social distancing seriously."

Analysis: No clear path to erasing Mississippi income tax

Associated Press

Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves says he will ask legislators during the 2021 session to phase out the state personal income tax. The Republican should not count on it happening quickly — and even with his party controlling the House and Senate, it might not happen at all.

Reeves' predecessor as governor, Republican Phil Bryant, signed a 2016 law that phases out the 3% income tax bracket, starting in calendar year 2018 and ending in 2022. Reeves was lieutenant governor then, and he helped push the plan to reality.

Reeves now says Mississippi could be more competitive if it also erases the 4% and 5% brackets.

"Let's eliminate the income tax, which is one huge speed bump to long-term economic growth and recovery," Reeves said in November.

Republican House Speaker Philip Gunn said he's open to this discussion.

"We're trying to find ways to have a more solid and more fair tax structure," Gunn said told reporters Dec. 7.

But, Republican Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann said during a news conference last week he won't rush into anything.

Hosemann said because of uncertainty caused by the



In this May 7, 2020 file photo, Gov. Tate Reeves, center, speaks of how he and House Speaker Philip Gunn, R-Clinton, left, and fellow Republican Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann, right, are working on a deal about how to spend \$1.2 billion in CARES Act funds, in Jackson, Miss. Although party mates, Reeves went from lieutenant governor to governor and Hosemann from secretary of state to lieutenant governor it did not prevent Hosemann and the third-term House speaker Gunn from going to court to challenge Reeves' partial veto of the state budget bill. Additionally, the Legislature passed a bill that striped Reeves of sole spending authority over the CARES Act funds. (AP Photo/Rogelio V. Solis, File)

coronavirus pandemic, legislators should see how the state economy fares in early 2021. He also said government needs to fund services that make the state stronger, and he wants to increase teacher pay.

"We're not going to go through a process of eliminating the ability of people to get educated, just for a talking point," Hosemann said of the tax cut proposal.

Hosemann said eliminating the 4% income tax would

cost about \$250 million to \$300 million and "we would have to make up somewhere." He said erasing the entire income tax would cost about \$1.9 billion to \$2 billion.

"Now, even if you phase that out over an eight-year period, it's still hundreds of millions of dollars a year," Hosemann said.

Without the income tax revenue, legislators could significantly cut state services or increase a different type

full potential," Hyde-Smith said. "I commend President Trump for his support of HBCUs and for being the impetus behind this legislation."

President Trump signed the HBCU PARTNERS Act into law on Dec. 31. The measure, introduced by Senator Tim Scott (R-S.C.) requires federal agencies to undertake annual planning and coordination of efforts to support and expand HBCU participation in relevant federal grants and programs. The law builds on the President's 2017 executive order on HBCUs.

The HBCU PARTNERS Act codifies the President's Board of Advisors on HBCUs to give these institutions an avenue to promote priorities and policy concerns within the federal government. It also strengthens transparency requirements of existing law by requiring agencies to track progress in HBCU participation and share that information with Congress.

Miss. senators cosponsored bill to strengthen federal agency support for Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Press Release

U.S. Senators Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) and Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.) praised enactment of the HBCU PARTNERS (Propelling Agency Relationships Towards a New Era of Results for Students) Act, legislation they cosponsored to strengthen partnerships between federal agencies and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

"Mississippi's Historically Black Colleges and Universities prepare thousands

of young people for success," said Wicker. "Greater engagement between federal agencies and HBCUs will help these institutions strengthen their impact on their communities. I am glad that the HBCU PARTNERS Act is now law."

"I look forward to Mississippi's HBCUs growing stronger as federal agencies more actively coordinate with them. This new law will energize that process and give new generations opportunities to excel and reach their

of tax. Advocates say eliminating the income tax would create more economic activity, spurring revenue growth without requiring an increase in other taxes. Hosemann said the state would need a "tremendously profitable" year to make up the difference.

"We've not had that growth in Mississippi," he said. "We've been in slow growth."

The individual income tax is one of the largest sources of Mississippi tax collections.

During the fiscal year that ended June 30, the state collected about \$5.8 billion from all types of state taxes, fees and other sources, including lawsuit settlements, according to the state Department of Finance and Administration. The biggest chunk of money, about \$2.2 billion, came from sales taxes. The next-largest source was about \$1.8 billion from individual income taxes.

The Mississippi Department of Revenue says the state does not charge individual income tax for the first \$6,000 for a single person or the first \$8,000 for the head of household — one person with at least one dependent. The exemption for a married couple is \$12,000.

Mississippi charges no individual income tax on the first \$2,000 of taxable income. It charges 3% on the next \$3,000, 4% on the next \$5,000 and 5% on all taxable income over \$10,000.

Texas and Florida are on the short list of states without a personal income tax. Tennessee taxes interest from bonds and dividends from stock, but not other personal income. All three of those states have seen significant growth in recent years, while Mississippi has been losing population.

Of course, tax structure is not the only factor influencing which states thrive.

Among those pushing to

phase out the income tax is Empower Mississippi, which advocates limited government.

"The more money Mississippi workers can keep in their pockets, the more they can invest in their families, their communities and their businesses," the group's president, Russ Latino, said in a Dec. 20 email. "Increased consumption in the economy drives new jobs and higher wages."

Nancy Loomer is executive director of The Parents' Campaign, an advocacy group for Mississippi public schools. She said Kansas experienced "catastrophe" when it dramatically reduced its income tax rate in 2012 and 2013.

"I say we take a pass on following the Kansas model," Loomer said in a Dec. 17 email. "Let's stick with a teacher pay raise, more pre-K and fully funded public schools — things that truly will make our state more livable."

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE RURAL AREA PROGRAM

The Mississippi Valley State University Mass Transit Program of Itta Bena, Mississippi, is considering applying to the Mississippi Department of Transportation, Public Transportation Division, for assistance through its Rural Area Program to provide public transportation services within the following counties, Carroll, Grenada, Holmes, Humphreys, Leflore, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, and Washington. Funding is available to state agencies, local public bodies and agencies thereof, non-profit organizations, operators of public transportation services in locations other than urbanized Area, and, under special circumstances, private operators of public transportation on a competitive basis to undertake eligible transportation activities.

The goals of the Rural Area Program are: to enhance the access of people in non-urbanized Area to health care, shopping, education, employment, public services and recreation; to assist in the maintenance, development, improvement, and use of public transportation systems in rural and small urban Area; to encourage and facilitate the most efficient use of all Federal funds used to provide passenger transportation in non-urbanized Area through the coordination of programs and services; and to provide for the participation of private transportation providers in non-urbanized transportation to the maximum extent feasible.

The purposes for which these funds can be used are capital purchases that include such items as support vehicles communication equipment, wheelchair lifts, etc.; administrative costs that include such items as salaries, office supplies, insurance, etc.; and operating expenses that include such items as driver's wages, fuel, oil, etc. More specific details regarding eligible activities, program requirements and the program criteria will be provided at a public hearing which will be held via Zoom teleconference on January 14, 2021 at 2:00 p.m. The public may participate in this hearing via Zoom, teleconference by following the Zoom instructions provided below:

Zoom Instructions for Participants:

General Vann is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Public Hearing

Time: Jan 14, 2021 02:00 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us05web.zoom.us/j/4270471092?pwd=b1FnaVJqU3YSUzRQVXphWjNlRmpjQT09>

Meeting ID: 427 047 1092

Passcode: R35kWg