

# AG Fitch and 13 Attorneys General ask congress to let state Right-to-Work laws stand

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## Press Release

Attorney General Lynn Fitch has joined a 14-state coalition of attorneys general in sending a letter to U.S. Senate leaders opposing a pro-union bill which passed the House of Representatives on a near party-line vote. The “Protecting the Right to Organize Act of 2021,” or “PRO Act,” would negate state Right-to-Work Laws and require workers to pay union dues in order to keep their jobs.

“Right-to-Work Laws protect American workers,” said Attorney General Lynn Fitch. “Every Mississippian deserves the freedom to decide how their hard-earned dollars will be spent, and they should not be forced to pay union dues as a requirement of their employment. My colleagues and I urge Congress to put the American worker first.”

The letter from the attorneys general points out that unions have long fought Right-to-Work Laws, but the U.S. Supreme Court has repeatedly rejected union argu-

ments that tried to overturn them. For example, in a 1949 case, Lincoln Federal Labor Union No. 19129 v. Northwestern Iron & Metal Co, a union claimed that Right-to-Work Laws were unconstitutional, arguing that the right to assemble gave the union the right to require workers to participate in union assemblies or lose their jobs. The Supreme Court quickly ruled against the union.

The PRO Act would undermine the Right-to-Work Laws passed by 27 states, including Mississippi. One section condones union contracts that would force employees to pay union fees “as a condition of employment.” Other sections would impose the so-called ABC Test recently rejected by 58 percent of California voters for distinguishing employees from independent contractors; legalize secondary boycotts by unions, which have been illegal since the 1940s; and mandate employers turn over personal information about employees to union organizers.

The attorneys general make clear in their letter that they are responsible for upholding the laws in their states, including laws that guard the freedom of employees to keep their jobs regardless of whether they pay union dues. The PRO Act would abruptly end 75 years of freedom by ending Right-to-Work Laws in 27 states. “Accordingly, we respectfully urge Congress not to enact the PRO Act, particularly those provisions negating the Right-to-Work Laws.”

The attorneys general sent the letter to Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer; Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee Chair Patty Murray; Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell; and Senate HELP Committee Ranking Member Richard Burr. Attorney General Lynn Fitch joins the attorneys general of South Carolina, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Utah, and West Virginia.

# Participants needed for COVID-19 Impact Study

## News Release

HATTIESBURG—The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) and Tougaloo College have partnered to research and better understand the challenges faced by young adults in Mississippi throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and the group is seeking 18 to 29-year-old individuals across the state to participate in the study.

The research study, Young Adults Against COVID-19 (YAACOV), will ask participants to complete a brief online survey and participate in one virtual focus group to share what they know about the virus. The discussion will include how they coped with the stressors and challenges brought on by the pandemic, as well as the sources of information sought to obtain information on vaccination and other prevention strategies.

“The Young Adults Against COVID-19 study is an opportunity for our young people to contribute to our understanding of how the virus has impacted their lives,” said Dr. Traci Hayes, Project Site Lead, and assistant professor at USM. “We are encouraging young

participate.”

The YAACOV study is one of five projects supported by the Mississippi Collaborative Engagement Alliance (MS CEAL), which was awarded to the University of Mississippi Medical Center and funded by the National Institutes of Health. Data published by the Mississippi State Department of Health shows that approximately 36 percent of the COVID-19 cases were among young adults from ages 18-39. Among this group, African American young adults are at greater risk of contracting and suffering from the virus.

“The data provided by the Mississippi State Department of Health identifies young adults as continuing to be a population of high risks for carrying and transmitting the coronavirus, and that is a major reason why this study is specifically designed to identify the concerns, challenges, and information needs of that population,” said Dr. Wendy White, YAACOV Principal Investigator and Principal Investigator of the Jackson Heart Study Undergraduate Program at Tougaloo College.

For more information, please contact Dr. Hayes at 601-266-5434 or visit [www.YAACOV19.info](http://www.YAACOV19.info).

# USDA-NRCS in Mississippi announces EQIP Emergency Disaster sign-up

## News Release

JACKSON, MS — The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has funds available for producers impacted by the recent winter storms in Mississippi. This funding is provided through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), a financial assistance program included in the Farm Bill. Applications that are received by May 7, 2021, will be considered for funding in this emergency sign-up.

The winter ice and snowstorms in March of 2021 caused significant damage to many seasonal high tunnels in Mississippi. All counties in Mississippi are eligible to participate in this program.

The only conservation practice eligible in the EQIP Emergency Disaster Sign-up is the seasonal high tunnel.

All applicants will need to meet all EQIP eligibility requirements. With this emergency assistance, NRCS will target early fall practice implementation. Landowners must implement the scheduled practice according to NRCS standards and specifications in a timely manner due to emergency circumstances.

“NRCS is dedicated to assisting landowners during hardship,” said Kurt Readus, State Conservationist. “This funding will help Mississippians to re-

# Conservation groups sue Engineer Corps over Yazoo Pumps

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — A coalition of conservation groups is suing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers over a massive flood-control project in the south Mississippi Delta they say was hastily approved in the final days of the Trump administration.

American Rivers, National Audubon Society, Sierra Club and Healthy Gulf filed a lawsuit in federal court in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday against the Corps and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The same group already sued the Environmental Protection Agency in January in an attempt to block the construction of pumps in the Yazoo Backwater area north of Vicksburg.

The newest lawsuit claims the Corps “severely underestimated the pumps’ devastating impacts and failed to inform the public about the true costs of the project.”

The group says the Yazoo Pumps would drain thousands of acres of wetlands that support more than 450 species of fish and wildlife, including several federally endangered species.

Jill Mastrototaro, Audubon’s Mississippi policy director, called the lawsuit “a last line of defense to protect birds, wildlife and people.”

“Not only will the Corps’

latest proposal degrade at least 39,000 acres of globally significant wetlands but over 82% of the Yazoo Backwater Area will continue to flood with the Pumps in place,” she said in a news release Wednesday.

The lawsuit asserts that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is abdicating its obligations under the Endangered Species Act if it allows the project to move forward.

The Yazoo Pumps project would involve the construction of a 14,000 cubic-feet-per-second pumping plant in the Yazoo Backwater Area to drain water, primarily from low-lying agricultural lands, during floods.

Opponents say pushing water out of the south Delta could cause worse flooding downstream along the Mississippi River, and that the main beneficiaries of the project would be agribusinesses.

The estimated price tag for the pumps is at least \$400 million and Congress has set aside only a portion of the money needed for the project.

Farmers and environmentalists have been arguing for decades over proposals for flood-control projects in the south Delta.

The flatlands between the Mississippi and Yazoo rivers are dominated by agriculture and dotted with small communities. The area has flooded nine of the past 10 years, including a 2019 deluge that

# Mississippi Lottery Corporation announces March transfer to the state

## News Release

JACKSON, MISS--The Mississippi Lottery Corporation (MLC) made its March transfer of \$16,745,250.19 on April 16 to the Lottery Proceeds Fund in the Mississippi State Treasury. This brings the total transfer for Fiscal Year 2021 to \$101,652,540.31.

“This is the first monthly transfer fully directed to fund education,” said MLC President Tom Shaheen. “We at the lottery are thrilled this milestone was reached only nine months into our first full fiscal year of operation. This is truly a great day for Mississippians.”

Per the Alyce G. Clarke Mississippi Lottery Law, the first \$80 million in net proceeds goes to road and bridge needs around the state for 10 years. Net proceeds over \$80 million go to the Education Enhancement Fund.

In accordance with the Alyce G. Clarke Lottery Law, the

provided a link to our online field office locator: <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov>. By using this locator tool, applicants can find contact information for your local field office. Covid-19 is new for all of us, but we have found a way to operate and assist producers in an effort to treat environmental concerns.

lasted several months.

The EPA vetoed a version of the proposed pump project in 2008, however, Andrew Wheeler, the EPA’s administrator appointed by former President Donald Trump, said in April that the EPA would reconsider that decision. An EPA regional administrator in Atlanta wrote Nov. 30 that the current version of the pump project is not subject to the agency’s 2008 veto.

It was approved by the Corps in January.

Supporters of the project say the current proposal is significantly different than the one the EPA previously vetoed, because the pumps would be in a different location miles away from the original plan. The current proposal calls for pumps near Deer Creek north of Vicksburg.

However, the coalition’s lawsuit says that the project has not changed significantly from what was proposed in 2008. They say it still includes the same 14,000 cubic feet-per-second pumping plant, affecting the same wetlands as the project originally proposed.

The pumps have bipartisan support in Mississippi, including from Democratic U.S. Rep. Bennie Thompson, whose district includes the backwater area.

The Corps of Engineers said in 2020 that pumps would decrease the depth and duration of flooding in the Yazoo Backwater, and that rainfall would keep this part of the Delta from drying out.

MLC is required to transfer net proceeds within 20 days following the close of each calendar month. The MLC was legislatively created in 2018 by the Alyce G. Clarke Mississippi Lottery Law, Senate Bill 2001. Visit us online at [www.mslotteryhome.com](http://www.mslotteryhome.com).

# \*MDOT

(Continued from page 3.) region is selected, the caller will be connected to the designated call center for the ride to be scheduled within 24-48 hours. For evening and weekend calls, every effort will be made to confirm scheduled trips by the next business day.

“We at MDOT recognize the importance of everyone receiving the vaccine to protect themselves and their loved ones, so we are supporting free transportation for our citizens to local vaccine locations,” Commissioner Willie Simmons, Central Transportation District.

The menu will also include an information option for questions and referrals through MDOT’s Public Transit Division. To reach the Public Transit Division contact them directly at (601) 359-7800.