Mississippi could help long-neglected **poor with Rescue Plan payments**

Mississippi Today by Bobby Harrison

The state's political leaders who are cutting off federal coronavirus-related federal unemployment benefits by the end of 2024. And the could provide needy Mis- funds are not needed to fill sissippians cash assistance budget shortfalls caused by through another federal pro- a decline in tax collections,

earlier this year by President lion. Joe Biden, could be paid to Mississippians in direct pay-

COVID-19."

The payments would be ately consider the program. similar to the federal benefits rowly target those who need to \$235 per week. help the most. The language from COVID-19.

Mississippi Today

by Will Stribling

continues to rank last in the period.

items, email to:

nation for the share of its

fully vaccinated.

MS COVID-19 vaccination

rate tumbles 65% since peak

In the first week of May, even had difficulties in early

46,440 Mississippians re- March to fill the 240 vacci-

ceived COVID-19 vaccines, nation slots per day they had

a drop of over 16% from through a partnership with

the week prior. The state's Walmart. Still, Cox is proud

weekly vaccination rate has that they were able to get

dropped 65% from its peak around 2,000 Mississippians

in late February. Mississippi vaccinated over a six-week

population that is partially or up in Maine, when they talk to

Allison Cox, executive di- it's so accessible to us and that

rector of the Jackson Hous- people aren't taking advan-

ing Authority, said she's sur- tage of it," Cox said.

the \$1.8 billion in federal funds for recurring expenses, such as for pay raises, since the money must be spent as some states have expe-Apparently, a portion of rienced, because of COVthe \$1.8 billion the state is ID-19. With two months left receiving from the American in the fiscal year, Mississippi Rescue Plan, signed into law has a surplus of \$804 mil-

Presumably, the Mississippi Legislature could craft a program to provide the The law provides for "di- cash assistance to the needy rect assistance to households during the 2022 session that and populations facing negabegins in January. Of course, tive economic impacts due to Gov. Tate Reeves could call a special session to immedi-

Just last week Reeves, afsent out over the past year. ter strong urging from state Those federal checks have House Speaker Philip Gunn, totaled \$3,200 for most Mis- opted out of a federal prosissippians. U.S. Treasury gram that provides unem-Department regulations, re- ployed Mississippians an leased last week, specified additional \$300 weekly in that the cash payments could jobless benefits, thanks to not be significantly larger the American Rescue Plan. than the checks sent out by The federal assistance is in the federal government, but addition to the normal state with more limitations to nar- unemployment benefit of up

Gunn wrote in a letter to in the law appears to allow Reeves that businesses "are benefits to be paid to the suffering from a labor shortfamilies of people who died age caused by unemployment benefits that exceed

getting vaccinated in Mis-

sissippi. Her organization

"Our northeast partners, like

us, they just can't believe that

Send us your news!

The Holmes County Herald welcomes reader

submissions for news, events and photos for

publication in our weekly newspaper. To submit

hcherald@gmail.com

Please include all pertinent details, dates, loca-

tion, name of the event or occasion, all associ-

The Legislature cannot use normal wage levels for productive work."

When asked about the issue of the enhanced federal unemployment benefits last May as the pandemic intensified, former state Economist Darrin Webb pointed "They (unemployed Mississippians) do want to work, but they also respond to market forces."

Rep. Robert Johnson, D-Natchez, the House minority leader, argued that before eliminating the federal unemployment benefits, the state should look to raise the \$7.25 per hour minimum wage as an incentive to encourage more people to want

The issue of the level of federal assistance is being debated against the backdrop of Mississippi having the nation's lowest per capita income. And Mississippi does perhaps less to help its low wage earners than any state in the nation.

Mississippi is one of 12 states that have not expanded Medicaid to provide health care coverage to primarily the working poor.

Until this past session, Mississippi provided the lowest cash assistance in the nation to poor children through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Children Program even though the benefits are paid with federal not state funds. This past ses-

partment of Health reported on Monday that 974,542 people in Mississippi about 33% of the state's population — have received at least their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Nearly 839,000 people have been fully inoculated since the state began distributing vaccines in December.

Thousands of vaccination appointments are currently available on the MSDH vaccine scheduler. All Mississippians ages 16 and up are currently eligible to receive a prised more people are not The Mississippi State De- COVID-19 vaccine.

sion the Mississippi Legislature agreed to increase those federal funds \$90 per month for a family of three to \$260 per month, meaning while still low nationally, it is not the lowest. Mississippi is among the

20 states that have not increased the minimum wage above the federally mandated base level of \$7.25 per hour, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

The maximum compensation paid by the state to workers who lose their job through no fault of their own also is the lowest in the nation at \$235 per week.

sippi has one of the nation's pay 9.2% of their income on time.

most regressive tax struc- state and local taxes, while tures.

viduals share a greater bur- income on state and local den than the state's wealthi- taxes, a study by the Instiest," Kyra Roby, a policy tute on Taxation and Ecoanalyst for One Voice that nomic Policy says. advocates for Mississippi's poor and working families, Reeves and Gunn would furrecently said while explain- ther lessen the tax burden on ing Mississippi's regressive the wealthy. tax structure.

ing less than \$16,100 pay governor offered federal 10.2% of their income on coronavirus-relief funds to state and local taxes, pri- many Mississippi businessmarily because of Missis- es, which indeed did face sippi's high sales tax rate, hardships because of the which includes the 7% tax pandemic. on groceries. Those in the middle — earning between lower-income residents face And to top it off, Missis- \$43,000 and \$77,500 pay — similar hardships all the

those earning more than The lower and middle indi-\$162,200 pay 6.5% of their

Tax plans offered by both

This past year, the Mis-For instance, those earn- sissippi Legislature and the

Many of Mississippi's

Spark Scientific Discovery at Home

influences many aspects of daily life in countless ways. It also helps shape the development of life skills from an early age. As children learn to communicate, think critically, make predictions and form opinions based on their observations, they are developing science skills that will last a lifetime.

Through its "Wonder of Science" initiative celebrating bringing innovation to kitchen tables for 100 years. Wonder Bread is helping to support ongoing scientific learning for students across America. In partnership with AdoptAClassroom.org and Emily Calandrelli, an American science communicator, MIT engineer and coexecutive producer and host of "Emily's Wonder Lab" on Netflix, the bread manufacturer is donating \$100,000 to provide U.S. middle and high schools with supplies and equipment for science education and presenting an online series of science experiments for students.

Allowing children to put those science-based skills to the test at home can be both simple and fun. Whether you head outside to identify clouds and species of animals or work on crafts indoors, there are plenty of everyday learning scenarios that allow parents to get hands-on with their children's education.

Bake Together

Baking can be a fun (and tasty) way to introduce scientific experimentation by following a recipe to see how the ingredients react together - or with too much or too little of a certain ingredient - and testing the end product against the desired results. As recipes are mixed, heated and cooled, baking introduces a variety of chemical reactions, including water evaporation, caramelization, browning and more.

Conduct Experiments with Everyday Supplies

Special tools and equip-

(Family Features) Science ment aren't necessary for etables that germinate and discovering and fostering a produce a crop quickly such love of science or conduct- as carrots or petunias then ing your own experiments. choose a location to plant. By using household items Test and prepare the soil then you may already have on plant your seeds and water as hand and following a few needed. simple instructions from Calandrelli, vou can create vour own homemade rockets or inflate a balloon.

"Getting kids excited about 2 tablespoons dry yeast science and interested in 1 tablespoon sugar how it affects our lives every 2-3 tablespoons lukewarm day is the best part of what I water do." Calandrelli said. "Join- 1 large mouth, glass pint ing Wonder Bread to spread bottle that message of wonder not 1 party balloon iust through my show but In cup, stir yeast, sugar and directly into classrooms is a water. Using funnel, pour fantastic opportunity. I can't mixture into bottle. Add wait to share my love of sci- more water as needed to ence."

Start a Garden

introduce children to a vari- mouth of bottle. ety of plant species and the Observe bubbles in yeast process through which they mixture and watch balloon grow is to grow your own inflate. Inflation can take 10garden. Start by letting the 30 minutes, depending on kids pick some plants or veg- mixture.

Balloon on a Bottle

Courtesy of Emily Calandrelli on behalf of Wonder Bread

push mixture through bottleneck.

One of the best ways to Quickly stretch balloon over



BALLOON ON A BOTTLE

ated people, organizations or groups, reason for event or occasion and NAMES OF ALL PEOPLE PICTURED IN ANY PHOTOGRAPH. We look forward to hearing from you!

-Holmes County Herald Staff