

*Mississippi opening

(Continued from page 1.)

conference. The state's temporary field hospital — on reserve for disasters — will be in a parking garage at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, and it could be open by Friday.

Dr. LouAnn Woodward,

the head of UMMC, said the facility should help with an influx of patients, including some transferred from smaller hospitals. She described the field hospital as "a Band-Aid."

"The big solution is, let's get this surge under control, and let's get the spread of this virus under control,"

Woodward said during a separate news conference. "And the way that we do that is by getting people vaccinated."

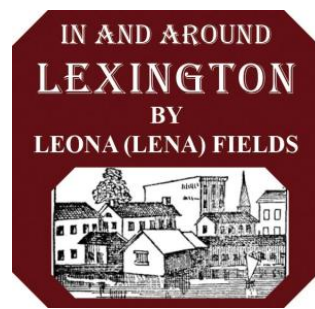
COVID-19 cases in Mississippi have risen sharply in recent weeks because of the highly contagious delta variant of the virus.

The state Health Department said 35% of Mississippi residents are fully vaccinated, compared to about 50% nationally. It also said that between July 13 and Tuesday in Mississippi, unvaccinated people made up 97% of those newly diagnosed with COVID-19, 90% of those hospitalized with it and 84% of those who died from it.

Mississippi has been approaching its record number of hospitalizations from the virus. Its highest number of COVID-19 hospitalizations for a single day was 1,444 on Jan. 4, before vaccines against the virus were widely available. The Health Department reported Wednesday that 1,378 patients with COVID-19 were in Mississippi hospitals Tuesday, down from 1,410 the day before.

Jim Craig, senior deputy at the state Health Department, said that 10 intensive care beds were available Wednesday in the state. He said the state has asked the federal government if Navy ships might be available to provide medical help.

Gov. Tate Reeves said



Mr. Percy Applewhite had to be put in a hospital for a few days. He's out now taking it easy at home.

One of Rev. Danny Johnson's sons had a stroke. I hope by now he is doing pretty good. Pray that he will survive.

Ternishia March's oldest grandson passed away recently. He had some medical issues. But when a teenager

passes, it kind of gets next to your heart. His mother Lakambia Wilson is my God daughter. She's going to have to forgive me for not knowing her last name by marriage. Lakambia lives in Tennessee. But her son was funeralized on Saturday at Quofaloma Cemetery near Mileston. Keep Lakambia "Punkin", the Wilsons and the Marches uplifted in prayer. Pray a special prayer for his two little brothers.

One day last week I talked to Mr. Ernest Lee Smith of the Acona Community. He says he's doing pretty good being as old man. We talked about how much blood the nurses draw when you go to the doctor. I talked to Ms.

Gwen Shaw last Thursday. She said her mother Mrs. Zerlena Roe has been sick for a while. But now she is improving.

Second Sunday, I went to Katie Horton, my sister-in-law's house long enough to wish her "Happy Birthday." Her son Sammie, who lives in Texas, gave her a surprise visit. He came home second Sunday and rode his mother all around Tchula and let her look at the improvement they are doing, especially on the highways. His wife's family, The Heads', had some kind of family gathering at Howard, near Mt. Zion Church.

Don't forget to get your COVID-19 vaccine if you have not had it.

Annie Lloyd Miles-Waddell passed recently. Before retiring, she worked at the Career Center (Vo-Tech) for Holmes County Schools. At her demise she was president of the Holmes County Retired Teachers Association. Keep her families uplifted in prayer.

Don't forget that Trinity M.B. Church will be holding revival services at 7:30 p.m. from August 30 thru September 1. Please be kind and wear a mask.

White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities Announces 2021 HBCU Scholars

The White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Initiative) recently announced its eighth cohort of HBCU Scholars. This program recognizes 86 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students for their accomplishments in academics, leadership, civic engagement and much more.

Currently enrolled at 54 of our nation's HBCUs, the scholars were selected from an applicant pool of over 200 students who submitted completed applications that included a transcript, resume, essay, and letter of recommendation. Applications also required the signature of their university president, adding a level of prestige to this application process.

"The HBCU Scholars an-

nounced today all have demonstrated remarkable dedication to their learning and exemplify the talent that our nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities have nurtured for generations," said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. "The students who hold this honor are committed to creating a more just and equitable society through their civic engagement. They are leaders and change-makers in their communities, and I cannot wait to learn from them as they serve as ambassadors both for the White House Initiative and their institutions of higher education."

HBCU Scholar from Holmes County is Kalon Johnson from Pickens who attends Alcorn State University in Lorman, MS.

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Wednesday that the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency has requested help from other states to deal with the surge of virus cases. He also said the agency is starting to set contracts with private entities to get additional medical workers.

"My number one goal from day one of this pandemic has always been to protect the integrity of our health care system," Republican Reeves wrote on Facebook. "The cur-

rent phase of the pandemic seems more and more like a 'pandemic of the unvaccinated' — as the Delta variant has had very few breakthrough cases amongst those who have 'gotten the shot' — but the goal remains the same: ensure everyone that can get better with quality care receives that quality care!"

More than 1,000 teachers and students in Mississippi schools tested positive for COVID-19 last week,

Lawmakers set hearings on Mississippi income tax elimination or cuts

Mississippi Today
By Geoff Pender

Lawmakers plan to hold two days of hearings on eliminating or cutting Mississippi's individual income tax on Aug. 25 and 26.

The hearings will be before a joint select committee of eight senators and eight House members, selected by the lieutenant governor and speaker, Senate Finance Chairman Josh Harkins said on Tuesday. Harkins said the hearings will likely include testimony from state and national tax experts, agency leaders and business people, but its itinerary hasn't been finalized.

The hearings are in response to House Speaker Philip Gunn's push to eliminate the state's individual income tax, cut taxes on groceries in half and increase sales and other taxes to make up the lost revenue. The House in this year's legislative session passed Gunn's plan, but the Senate killed it without a vote, saying the plan needed more vetting and vowing to study it over the summer and fall.

Recently, Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann said, "The Senate will hold hearings ... on comprehensive tax reform, and we have invited the House to join us." While he has stopped short of agreeing that individual income

taxes can be eliminated, Hosemann has said recently he expects at least a cut in income taxes, with state revenues coming in at a record click recently.

Gunn's plan has raised concern from numerous interests. Advocates for poor and moderate income Mississippians and retirees fear it would shift more of the state's tax burden on them. Big business interests such as manufacturers and some small business groups fear the sales tax increases in the plan would increase their "input" costs drastically down their supply chains.

Some lawmakers on both sides of the aisle fear the major change in tax structure — individual income taxes generate about \$1.8 billion a year, or 32% of the state's revenue — would tank the state budget.

Gov. Tate Reeves has said he supports eliminating the income tax, but wants to do it with no commensurate increase in other taxes.

While Gunn has had trouble getting business and interest groups to sign on with his plan, he said last week that it has been warmly received by many people as he's traveled the state talking with civic and business groups in recent months. Gunn said the nine states with no income tax, including Florida, Tennessee and

Texas, are economically thriving and attracting more people, unlike Mississippi, one of just three states to lose population over the last decade.

No state has ever phased out an individual income tax. Alaska, the only state to eliminate an existing income tax, did so in one fell swoop.

Harkins agreed with Hosemann's assessment that at least an income tax cut is in the offing next year. But he said eliminating income taxes or a major overhaul of tax structure will take much deliberation and study.

"You've got one chance to do this right, and I want to make sure that we are really looking for everything, dotting our Is and crossing our Ts," Harkins said. "There's a reason no other state has done this, because it's hard to do it, but I know other states are in the process of trying ... My goal with these hearings is to provide a lot of information — how the money comes in, from what sources, how much, what are some of the diversions and tax credit exemptions ... What are the pitfalls? Proceeding with caution is how I would describe this."

Hosemann also recently said, "All of the hearings will be webcasted because we want you to be a part of the process. It is your money."