

Governor Reeves Announces MS Accepting Workforce Pell Applications

JACKSON, Miss. – Gov. Tate Reeves announced that the State Workforce Investment Board has approved a state policy framework to guide Mississippi’s review and recommendation process for Workforce Pell Grant programs ahead of the program’s July 1, 2026, implementation date.

The new federal Workforce Pell Grant program will allow eligible Pell Grant recipients to use federal aid for approved short-term workforce education programs offered by participating Title IV-eligible colleges and universities. Under federal requirements, eligible workforce programs may be as short as eight weeks and must prepare students for high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand jobs.

“Mississippi’s workforce strategy has helped attract record-breaking private capital investment and train thousands for the jobs of the next 50 years. Workforce Pell will build on that success and better prepare Mississippians for high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand careers. By expanding access to high-quality,

employer-driven training, we’re strengthening our workforce, supporting businesses, and positioning Mississippi for even greater momentum.”

To be considered for Workforce Pell eligibility in Mississippi, programs must align with Mississippi’s priority workforce needs, including occupations and sectors identified through the state’s workforce and labor market priorities. Programs must also lead to a recognized credential and provide academic credit that can be applied toward at least one certificate or degree pathway at an eligible institution.

Students may qualify for Workforce Pell if they meet standard federal Pell Grant eligibility requirements, enroll at a participating eligible institution, and are accepted into a short-term workforce program that has been approved through the required state and federal review process.

Established by Congress in 2025, Workforce Pell expands Pell Grant access to certain high-quality, short-term workforce programs that are designed to meet employer demand and sup-

port student progression into stackable and portable credentials.

Gov. Reeves designated AccelerateMS, Mississippi’s Office of Workforce Development, to coordinate the state’s Workforce Pell implementation process. In that role, AccelerateMS will work in consultation with the State Workforce Investment Board to review institutional applications, determine whether programs meet state workforce priorities, and support the submission of qualifying programs for required federal approval.

AccelerateMS will begin accepting institutional applications on July 1, 2026. Interested entities should check <https://acceleratems.org/workforce-pell/> for the state’s review process and guidance. Eligible programs approved through the state review process must also receive federal approval before students may access Workforce Pell Grant funding.

Peggy’s Ponderings

This has been some of the hottest and blistering days I have experienced in a long time, at least since last July. I seem to forget just how scorching the Mississippi weather can be in the ‘good ole summertime’.

Of course, our little garden is proliferating as fast as gremlins in a water bath. My farmer Roy gathers the abundance of vegetables every other day and my freezers are full of squash – squash – squash. I’ve made pickles, the ones you “rot” in water and vinegar for several days, canned pickled okra, and eat as many raw vegetables as possible that one person can munch and ingest. I’ve given plentiful amounts to our children, brothers, and sisters, friends and relatives and my kitchen counters are still covered

with yellow, red, and green fruits and a few purple egg plants. These are waiting and ready for me to preserve them for the cold, absent of fresh veggies wintertime.

Now mind you, I’m not complaining about the abundance of this produce but sometimes I just get to thinking, “We have several grocery stores full of produce so why am I peculiar in growing and preserving my own with all the added steps that go into my own preserving these fresh vegetables?” My husband being the forever country boy he is assures me that bulk preservation and home makes a big difference. I’m sure all of you at home gardeners and farm boys will agree.

I was brought up working in a garden and growing off fryers, (small chickens), and raising all of our

food for the cold months so I realize all this, but I also realize that when the overabundance of produce reaches my back door it’s my ‘liability’. Then I also remember, I only asked him to plant a FEW hills of cucumbers and tomatoes, not over and above the normal.

It seems that every year our little patch is taken over by the pasture grass that once thrived there, and it seems to consume the good stuff. And the most urgent thing I have to be ever anxious about is that with the grass as plentiful as it is, I have to be ever vigilant that when he goes down to gather the fruit he doesn’t fall into the overgrowth and cannot get up. So, I watch out the window, from my cool kitchen as he gathers. I’m a good wife like that.

PICKLED OKRA

Pack quart or pint jars, with small okra, stuffing tightly so no space, and add ½ water and ½ white vinegar, 1 t. sea salt, 1 t. dried dill seed, ½ t. red hot pepper seasoning to each jar. Heat the water and vinegar till boiling and pour over okra in jar. Seal and water bath for 5 minutes. Let cure for 3-4 days and enjoy.

Peggy Sims is a life-long resident of Attala County and columnist.



Peggy Sims



OFFICIAL STATEMENT:

Voter Registration Verification QR Codes

It has recently come to our attention that mail is being distributed with a QR Scan Code, which has the purpose of directing voters to the Voter Registration Verification on the Mississippi Secretary of State’s website. Please be advised use of the Voter Registration Verification link will require the voter to input the information exactly as it is in the voter’s registration. Further, an authentication feature is used to ensure only the person knowing the correct response will be verifying that registration.

The best source for verifying voter registration will always be contacting the circuit clerk in the county where you are registered and/or by contacting our Elections hotline at 1-800-

829-6786. This office cannot verify whether or not links or QR codes distributed by private entities are accurate or safe, and we always advise caution before scanning a link from an unknown source.

As part of the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) #TrustedInfo2026 initiative, all Mississippians are encouraged to utilize the Secretary of State’s Y’all Vote webpage for valuable elections information, resources, and tools. For up-to-date information, like and follow the Secretary of State’s Facebook page and X (formerly known as Twitter) page.

MICHAEL WATSON
Secretary of State
State of Mississippi

Town of Pickens

Address: (Post Office Box 297)163 North Second Street Pickens, MS 39146

Telephone (662) 468 -2171

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FEE Assessments

To avoid a penalty charge, all utility bills must be paid in full by the 18th day of each month by the close of business. If the 18th day falls on a non-business day, the penalty will be assessed on the next regularly scheduled workday for the Town of Pickens, MS.

To avoid interruption of services (disconnection), all utility bills must be paid in full by the 25th day of each month by the close of business. The failure of the town to insist upon a penalty charge or disconnection does not waive the town’s right to enforce these rules for future utility bills. Should an interruption of service occur, a \$53.50 service interruption fee will be added to the utility bill. An interruption of service is considered to have taken place on the 26th day of each month, whether or not the service has been physically disconnected. If the 26th day of the month falls on a non-business day, then the actual disconnection will take place on the next regularly scheduled workday; however, this will not eliminate the \$53.50 service disconnection fee.

Mid-Winter Exception Rule

A 30-day extension from the original due date may be granted to customers to avoid disconnection during mid-winter months. To qualify, customers must submit a written request including the service address and the total bill amount. Additionally, the customer must provide documented proof that utility assistance has been applied for and approved through an agency such as Central Mississippi Incorporated. No formal payment plans are permitted under this rule. Approval for this extension may be granted by the Mayor, the Mayor Pro Tempore in the Mayor’s absence, or a quorum of three (3) Board Members.

Reverse Flow Policy

If a customer receives a water bill reflecting a suspected error, a flat-rate bill may be applied if documented proof of a reverse flow is established. The customer must provide a written complaint regarding the error. The reverse flow must be verified by the Public Works Supervisor and certified by the Mayor, the Mayor Pro Tempore in the Mayor’s absence, or the Town Clerk.

Reporting

The Deputy Clerk shall track all associated payments and adjustments and will prepare a monthly report to be submitted to the Town Clerk. This reporting process shall include a monthly review of inactive lists, late fee lists, and disconnect lists to ensure accuracy and compliance.

Confidentiality and Open Meetings Act Compliance

All internal reporting lists, including inactive accounts, late fee records, and disconnection notices, contain sensitive customer information. These documents are for official administrative use only and must be handled with strict confidentiality.

While the Mississippi Open Meetings Act generally requires public bodies to meet in open session, the Mississippi Public Records Act and related state regulations recognize that specific financial information and customer records may be exempt from public disclosure. If these reports are discussed in a meeting, the Board may consider entering an executive session if the discussion involves specific personnel matters or other statutorily protected information.

Note on Executive Sessions: In accordance with the Mississippi Open Meetings Act, even when the Board enters an executive session to discuss protected information, minutes must still be recorded. These minutes must reflect the reason for entering the executive session and any official actions taken during that time, while maintaining the confidentiality of protected details. Unauthorized disclosure of sensitive customer data to any party outside of authorized town officials is strictly prohibited.

Notice of Availability

A copy of this general Utility Billing and Disconnection Policy is available for public inspection at Pickens Town Hall during regular business hours. Residents may request a physical copy of this policy by contacting the Town Clerk’s office. Please note that while the general policy is public, specific customer account details and internal reporting lists remain confidential and exempt from general public records requests. **Fees for copies of this policy or related public records shall be assessed in accordance with the Town of Pickens Public Records Request Ordinance.**

Mayor William Damon Edwards

Alderwoman/Mayor Pro Tempore Delorine Edwards, Alderwoman Kristen Ellis, Alderwoman Shakira Jones, Alderman Kenji Tucker, Alderwoman Pearl Sheppard

Town Clerk: Shameka Gypson

Deputy Clerk Maranda Stasher