



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE
ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

Opinion Column

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Legislature was Right to Pass HB 1020 Aimed to Restore Law and Order in Jackson
By: Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson

Now that the dust has settled on the 2023 Mississippi Legislature's Regular Session, I believe I can speak for a majority of law-abiding Mississippians in commending our Legislature for passing House Bill 1020, and I appreciate Governor Reeves for signing it into law. This bill, authored by Representatives Trey Lamar, Fred Shanks, and Price Wallace can go a long way toward helping restore law and order within the City of Jackson, Mississippi. Among other things, the bill expands the Capitol Complex Improvement District (CCID), enabling Capitol Police to patrol as an added law enforcement agency throughout the area. These officers will have the necessary authority to respond to crimes in the CCID area, thereby serving as an additional deterrent to criminal activity across the Jackson area. In addition, special judges appointed by the Supreme Court, additional district attorneys, and additional public defenders are authorized to handle a backlog of cases so that rulings and dispositions may be made in a timely manner in response to various crimes and issues brought before them. A special CCID Inferior Court is created to help address a backlog in criminal cases in the area. A 911 system is authorized to be developed by the Department of Public Safety to assist the public in receiving assistance from law enforcement agencies. Each of these actions will be significant. When implemented together, these measures should provide the citizens of Jackson a ray of hope that the reign of terror by criminals, thugs, and gangsters must come to an end.

With multiple agencies working together throughout the CCID, good things can happen when the law is enforced consistently and when the judicial system holds wrongdoers accountable. Law and order can be restored.

As the host facility for the state's largest events, the Mississippi State Fairgrounds is located in our capital city. During the 2022 Mississippi State Fair, we developed a multi-agency task force and security plan that involved multiple layers of law enforcement – Jackson Police Department, Hinds County Sheriff's Office, Capitol Police, State Troopers, and other state and local law enforcement agencies. Working together, we were able to host the safest State Fair in America right here on the Fairgrounds in Jackson, Mississippi. In February, we had an incident-free Dixie National Rodeo using the same techniques. It is costly, and it is not easy, but we know it can be done.

I have read the various media reports, and I understand that not everyone is happy about House Bill 1020. But personally, I cannot take anyone seriously who complains about these basic law enforcement measures designed to help restore a level of peace throughout Jackson's CCID. On a daily basis, Mississippians are bombarded with the news reports of crime and danger in Jackson, Mississippi. People

from every corner of Mississippi are afraid to travel to Jackson, and I don't blame them. The statistics prove that their concerns are well-founded, but House Bill 1020 directly addresses those concerns.

As Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce, I regularly talk with the residents of Mississippi including the residents of Jackson, those who commute to work in Jackson, and those who must travel to Jackson for medical treatments and care in our premier hospitals. What I find is that as law-abiding Mississippians of every race and every background, we all want the same thing: a capital city of peace and security, not of chaos and lawlessness.

So, my hat is off to the Mississippi Legislature and Governor Reeves. Thank you to the Legislature for hearing the concerns of so many Mississippians including myself and for enacting these common-sense enhancements to the law enforcement and judicial system within the City of Jackson, Mississippi. We join with you and all law-abiding Mississippians and pray that these reforms will have the desired result of restoring peace and security for all people in the City.

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