



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI**  
**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE**  
ANDY GIPSON  
COMMISSIONER

# Opinion Column

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## **Legislature Must Slam Door Shut on Foreign Land Ownership**

By: Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson

Last week I attended the Republican National Convention with our Mississippi delegation. On Wednesday night, President Donald J. Trump's former press secretary and current Arkansas Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders spoke to the energetic crowd. The floor was electrified by her powerful speech supporting the America First agenda. To roaring applause, Governor Sanders reminded Americans that Arkansas was the first and only state to kick China off Arkansas farmland and out of the State. She is right, but with legislative support Mississippi could be next.

During the 2024 Legislative Session, our Mississippi Legislature missed a great opportunity to follow Arkansas' lead. Rather than banning foreign countries including our enemies from buying up Mississippi farms, the Legislature opened the door even wider to foreign control by passing the "Mississippi Foreign Land Ownership Act."

Prior to the passage of the 2024 Act, Mississippi law generally prohibited the ownership of Mississippi land by any "nonresident alien," a phrase that had never been precisely defined by the Legislature in law. The old law, coupled with the lack of a clear enforcement mechanism left a gaping loophole for decades, allowing numerous foreign countries such as the Netherlands, Canada, and many other foreign interests to purchase vast tracts of Mississippi farmland. Even our enemy China was able to grab a small chunk of Mississippi. In fact, according to the most recent USDA report issued last December, foreign countries and/or foreign-controlled entities currently control nearly 1 million acres of Mississippi agricultural and forest lands.

In 2023, the Mississippi Foreign Purchase of Farmland Study Committee called on the Legislature to create a clear enforcement mechanism within the law to stop foreign interests including our adversaries from continuing to buy up Mississippi's most valuable asset, our farmland.

Unfortunately, effective July 1, 2024, the new law passed by the Mississippi Legislature will open the door even wider for foreign interests including our enemies to acquire interests in Mississippi farmland. Perhaps unintentionally, Senate Bill 2519 actually eliminated the broad prohibition of nonresident ownership.

The new law's limitations only apply to foreign adversaries such as China and Russia, and it even allows these enemies to hold up to 50 percent ownership in Mississippi farmland. The new law also allows any country including our enemies to lease up to 500 acres for "research" or "experimental" purposes.

Conservative Mississippians understand this issue: China, Russia, and our foreign enemies should not be allowed to hold even a 10 percent interest in our farmland; they should have ZERO percent.

Yet rather than banning foreign ownership of our land, the new Mississippi law makes it easier for foreign interests such as foreign-controlled investment companies to buy up Mississippi. Even Russia, China, Iran, Cuba, North Korea, or others can get in on the action in partnership with other foreigners which is exactly how they get around trade restrictions and sanctions internationally.

The Revolutionary War by which our Founders gained independence was fought and won on the issue of who would have the right to control the soil of these United States. The fact that any foreign country will be now able to do by monetary transaction what would normally be done by military conquest should give every citizen in Mississippi a wake-up call.

Food security is national security, and our land is Mississippi's most valuable asset. As Governor Sanders said, Arkansas was the first state to kick China out. Mississippi should be next. While I am disappointed this year the Mississippi Legislature did not put a full ban on foreign enemies' ownership in Mississippi farmland, I strongly encourage the Legislature to fix this law and slam the door shut on China in 2025. Let us put the America First agenda in action. Let's put Mississippi First.

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**Photo Attached:**

