



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE**

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

COMMISSIONER'S ORDER

**ORDER DESIGNATING
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES OF SUBSTANTIAL MERIT**

I, J. Andrew Gipson, Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce of the State of Mississippi, do hereby issue this Commissioner's Order Designating Educational Opportunities of Substantial Merit ("Order") pursuant to the power and authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the State of Mississippi, including, without limitation, Titles 69 and 75 of the Mississippi Code, as the elected statewide public official having primary jurisdiction for the promotion of Mississippi agriculture, livestock and equine events and having management and control of:

- a) the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce ("MDAC") and its employees and properties under Miss. Code Ann. § 69-1-1, *et seq.*;
- b) the Mississippi State Fairgrounds under Miss. Code Ann. 69-5-1, *et seq.*;
- c) the Mississippi Farmers Market under 69-7-101, *et seq.*
- d) the Jim Buck Ross Agriculture and Forestry Museum under 69-1-32, *et seq.*; and
- e) any and all other contractors, subcontractors, properties and locations not listed herein under the management and/or control of MDAC by virtue of State or Federal law.

I do hereby make the findings below and issue the following Order with respect to agriculture, livestock and equine events supported by or through MDAC and funds related thereto (hereinafter "Covered Events") and designating educational opportunities of substantial merit as set forth herein:

WHEREAS, on April 8, 2026, Senate Bill 2103 as passed by the Mississippi Legislature was signed into law by the Governor, creating new standards for Compulsory School Attendance; and

WHEREAS, the new Compulsory School Attendance law requires that students not miss "more than five (5) excused absences per semester Any additional excused absences beyond this limit must be specifically approved by the school district superintendent, or his or her designee, upon a showing of extenuating circumstances. Extenuating circumstances may

include, but are not limited to, prolonged illness or injury supported by medical documentation, extended religious observances, or participation in educational opportunities of substantial merit, including out-of-state educational travel.” Miss. Code Ann. § 37-13-91(4)(b); and

WHEREAS, Mississippi’s many agriculture, livestock, equine and related events are educational by nature, and students routinely benefit by participation in such events; and

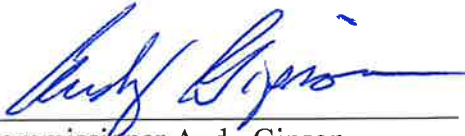
WHEREAS, Mississippi students should not be punished or otherwise harassed due to their participation in agricultural, livestock, equine and related events, because these events do provide educational opportunities of substantial merit:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, J. Andrew Gipson, Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce of the State of Mississippi, by virtue of the power and authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the State of Mississippi, do hereby designate each of the following agricultural, livestock equine and related events as “educational opportunities of substantial merit” which should be recognized by school districts as excused absences for purposes of Mississippi’s new Compulsory School Attendance Law (“Covered Events”), effective immediately:

- a) The Mississippi State Fair Livestock Shows and related events;
- b) The Dixie National Livestock Show and Rodeo and related events including but not limited to the Dixie National Wagon Train;
- c) County, district, state, regional and national Livestock and Horse shows, Rodeos, Open Shows and related events;
- d) 4-H and FFA educational and competitive contests (district, regional, state, and national contests), including but not limited to shooting sports and other 4-H or FFA related events;
- e) 4-H and FFA educational field days, clinics, or workshops educational and informative for their project area;
- f) State and National FFA and 4-H Meetings and Conventions;
- g) Agricultural youth leadership opportunities including but not limited to the Commissioner’s Agriculture Youth Council, Farm Bureau sponsored youth development events, and similar events sponsored by Mississippi’s land grant universities; and
- h) Any other agricultural related events as may be requested and supplemented by the Commissioner to this Order.

This Order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and shall remain in effect and in full force unless it is modified, amended, rescinded, or superseded by the Commissioner.

Given under my hand this
the 17th day of September, 2026.



Commissioner Andy Gipson