



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

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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Ag Commissioner Andy Gipson Issues Order Designating Agricultural Events as Excused Absences

JACKSON, Miss. – Today, in response to numerous phone calls and contacts from Mississippi parents and youth, Ag Commissioner Andy Gipson issued a Commissioner’s Order Designating Educational Opportunities of Substantial Merit for Mississippi students attending a number of agricultural educational events. The Order can be found online here:

<https://agnet.mdac.ms.gov/agManage/uploads/3438.pdf>. In April 2026, the Mississippi Legislature passed a new compulsory school attendance law mandating no more than five (5) excused absences, unless approved by school superintendents or administrators.

The Commissioner’s Order designates a series of Mississippi state and local agricultural educational events as being educational opportunities of substantial merit, which under the new law should qualify the absences as excused, if approved by school administrators.

In connection with the Order, Commissioner Gipson also provided a sample letter, which can be found online here: <https://agnet.mdac.ms.gov/agManage/uploads/3439.pdf>, for use in requesting excused absences for a student’s attendance of agricultural, livestock, horse and related events.

“Mississippi agriculture is the backbone of our economy and our state, and we need to encourage our 4-H and FFA students to attend these outside-the-classroom educational opportunities,” said Commissioner Gipson. “There is a lot more learning than within the four walls of a classroom. With livestock, horse and other competitions, our youth are learning soft skills of interpersonal communication, as well participating in the best youth leadership development program in Mississippi. I look forward to seeing everyone at the Mississippi State Fair, October 8-18.”

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