

Mississippi Legislature overrides Governor's Education veto and funds small businesses



By Guest Columnist
Mississippi Representative,
Tom Miles

Special to
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We as legislators returned to the capitol on Monday, September 10, to override the Governor's veto of the Education appropriation bill, funded the teacher incentive program, and also amended the 'Back to Business Mississippi Grant Program' that was created back in May and increases the grant program to \$3,500 per business.

The first bill the House took up was the Education appropriation bill that was vetoed by the Governor. The veto was the first time a Governor had been overridden in over 18 years. The House override was 110-6, and the Senate was 41-1.

When the Education bill was vetoed, it put all of our schools districts in limbo. The budget will help fill all the uncertainties that were not filled. By the legislature overriding the veto, it will finally allow our school districts to pay teacher salaries, activate classroom supply cards, fund school nurses, allow the blind and deaf schools to open, fund FFA programs, and pay other operating expenses. This was accomplished without reducing the MAEP amount originally allocated, which would have taken money from our schools, and by approving an additional \$28 million to fund the School Recognition bonuses teachers are entitled to. The School Recognition Program is based on last year's accountability results, not this year's, when testing was suspended due to COVID-19.

After passing with an overwhelming majority in each chamber, SB 3053 will implement several changes to the program that was created to disburse \$300 million of Mississippi's CARES Act funds to small businesses that have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic — \$60 million in direct payments to businesses that were forced to

close by government order and \$240 million in grants to Mississippi small businesses.

The bill passed Monday will make the \$2,000 direct payment, which is separate from the grant program, available to additional businesses. As for the grant program, the minimum amount granted has been increased from \$1,500 to \$3,500.

Also, a provision has been removed to eliminate a deduction in grant funding for businesses that also received funding from the federal Paycheck Protection Program. Prior to this change, if a business was awarded a \$10,000 grant and had gotten any funding from the PPP, those funds would've been subtracted from the grant allotment from the Mississippi Development Authority.

If you have already filled out the application, you will be grandfathered in and don't have to do anything else to receive the extra money or other changes. If you own a business, please go to the website www.backtobusinessms.org to fill out the application process, for the grant program remains open. Every business will basically receive \$3,500 for filling out the application.

We have now adjourned but will have to go back in the days to come to finish the Department of Marine Resources budget when an agreement can be made between coast lawmakers. We also have saved several days of the session to go back in October to adjust the dollars that are left to deal with CARES money, to make sure that it is allocated before the federal deadlines.

Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to serve you as your State Representative. Thank you all once again for the kindness, prayers, and friendship remembering me and my family in the passing of my mom. Your kindness and friendship will never be forgotten.

If I can be an assistance to you at any time, please stop by my office in Forest, email me at tmiles@house.ms.gov, or call me at 601-469-7886.

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