

April 24, 2025

TO THE MISSISSIPPI SENATE:

GOVERNOR'S VETO MESSAGE FOR SENATE BILL 2573

I am returning Senate Bill 2573: "AN ACT TO CREATE THE "MISSISSIPPI TOURISM REORGANIZATION ACT"; TO CREATE THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM; TO REQUIRE THE GOVERNOR TO APPOINT, WITH THE ADVICE AND CONSENT OF THE SENATE, AN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM; TO PRESCRIBE THE GENERAL POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR; TO AUTHORIZE THE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM TO ESTABLISH A PROGRAM OF GRANTS TO BE MATCHED BY TOURISM ENTITIES IN THE STATE; TO AUTHORIZE THE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM TO SELL ADVERTISING AND OTHER TOURISM PROMOTIONAL INFORMATION AND TO CREATE THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM ADVERTISING FUND; TO CREATE THE MISSISSIPPI TOURISM ASSOCIATION MARKETING ADVISORY BOARD TO ASSIST THE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM; TO PROVIDE THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION, THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, AND THE STATE PERSONNEL BOARD SHALL HAVE THE POWERS NECESSARY IN CARRYING OUT THE CREATION OF THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM REQUIRED BY THIS ACT; TO AMEND SECTION 27-65-75, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, AS AMENDED BY HOUSE BILL NO. 1, 2025 REGULAR SESSION, TO DIVERT A PORTION OF SALES TAX REVENUE COLLECTED FROM RESTAURANTS AND HOTELS INTO THE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM ADVERTISING FUND INSTEAD OF THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY TOURISM FUND; TO REPEAL SECTION 57-1-59, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH PROVIDES GENERAL POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY WITH RESPECT TO TOURISM; TO REPEAL SECTION 57-1-60, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH AUTHORIZES THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TO ESTABLISH A PROGRAM OF GRANTS TO FINANCE, PROMOTE AND ADVERTISE LOCAL TOURIST ATTRACTIONS; TO REPEAL SECTION 57-1-61, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH PROVIDES FOR THE TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS OF THE TRAVEL AND TOURISM DIVISION OF THE AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL BOARD TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT; TO REPEAL SECTION 57-1-63, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH PROVIDES FOR THE TRANSFER OF POWERS AND DUTIES OF STATE AGENCIES RELATING TO TOURISM TO THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY; TO REPEAL SECTION 57-1-64, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH AUTHORIZES THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY TO SELL ADVERTISING AND OTHER TOURISM INFORMATION AND CREATES THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY TOURISM ADVERTISING FUND; TO REPEAL SECTION 57-1-64.1, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH CREATES THE MISSISSIPPI TOURISM ASSOCIATION MARKETING ADVISORY BOARD TO ASSIST THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES."

Senate Bill 2573 establishes the Mississippi Department of Tourism as an independent state agency, enumerates its powers and responsibilities, provides for the appointment of an executive director and codifies the executive director's duties, authorizes the new agency to administer grant programs, establishes the Mississippi Tourism Association Marketing Board, and directs DFA, ITS and SPB to assist in the creation of the new agency. Additionally, SB 2573 repeals the general powers and duties of the Mississippi Development Authority ("MDA") with respect to tourism and related grant programs.

Due to the budget impasse between the Mississippi House of Representatives and the Mississippi Senate, Senate Bill 2573 is presented to me without the accompanying appropriations bills for either MDA or the newly created Mississippi Department of Tourism. Accordingly, I am unable to determine either the impact that the removal of tourism-related duties from MDA will have on legislative appropriations for that agency, or if the legislative appropriations for the Mississippi Department of Tourism will be sufficient to enable it to be stood-up and function as a stand-alone agency. While I am strongly opposed to enlarging the size of government by creating a new state agency and have tirelessly fought to shrink the size of government and not take one cent more from taxpayers than is absolutely necessary to fund the essential functions of government, if sufficient appropriations are provided to both MDA and the Mississippi Department of Tourism, I would allow this bill to become law. However, because Senate Bill 2573 is unaccompanied by its companion appropriations bills, I am compelled to veto it at this time. It would be irresponsible to either cripple the efforts of MDA at a time when the Mississippi economy is booming or to set-up the newly created Mississippi Department of Tourism to fail, determinations that cannot be made at this time.

Respectfully submitted,

TATE REEVES
GOVERNOR

