The Office of the Mississippi Secretary of State

Five Year Strategic Plan

For the Fiscal Years 2024 - 2028

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SECRETARY OF STATE

1. Agency Mission Statement

The Secretary of State's Office exists and is committed to serving the citizens of the State of Mississippi by fulfilling our statutory requirements in a transparent, efficient, and cost-effective manner.

2. Statement of Agency Philosophy

First established in the 1817 Constitution of the State of Mississippi, the Mississippi Secretary of State has since been entrusted with several additional duties, responsibilities, and functions by the State Legislature. We are dedicated to being both a service and information agency - committed to modeling efficient, effective operations and prudent resource management. We will always conduct our business with the understanding we work for all Mississippians.

3. Relevant Statewide Goals and Benchmarks
(From the "Statewide Strategic Plan for Performance and Budgetary Success – Building a Better Mississippi" created by the Mississippi Legislature in July 2014)

   a. STATEWIDE GOAL – "To develop a robust state economy that provides the opportunity for productive employment for all Mississippians"

   b. STATEWIDE GOAL – "To ensure that current and future generations have access to the state's abundant natural resources through restoration, protection, conservation and wise development of those resources"

   c. STATEWIDE GOAL – "To create an efficient government and an informed and engaged citizenry that helps to address social problems through the payment of taxes, the election of capable leaders at all levels of government and participation in charitable organizations through contributions and volunteerism"

4. Overview of the Agency 5-Year Strategic Plan

Over the next five years, the Secretary of State will continue to increase efficiency through streamlining operations, shrinking the size of government where possible, and continuing to serve Mississippians to the best of our ability. These efforts will support the Agency's mission to fulfill duties in a transparent, efficient, and cost-effective manner. The Secretary of State's Office will continue to operate as a results-based, goal-driven Agency.

Specifically, the Agency will focus on the following projects:

Student Ambassador Program. In keeping with the Secretary of State's charge to educate Mississippians and provide outreach, the SOS Student Ambassador Program has been developed and implemented. This cooperative program between our office and high school seniors will provide students with a first-hand account of state government and the Mississippi elections process. Student participants will attend a fall and spring summit and participate in periodic conference calls with SOS staff and other state officials. Participants will have opportunity to

connect with local elections officials and to develop voter registration campaigns in their high schools. This yearly program will encourage the next generation of Mississippi leaders to stay in Mississippi and make an impact for years to come.

Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2020. President Donald Trump signed a $380,000,000.00 Omnibus Bill in March 2018, with Mississippi receiving $4,483,541.00. On December 20, 2019, President Donald Trump signed the Consolidated Appropriation Act of 2020 authorizing an additional $425,000,000.00 in new Help American Vote Act funds. Of that money, Mississippi received $5,037,597.00. These amounts were calculated by the U.S. Government using the State of Mississippi's Voting Age Population. In August 2020, the Elections Assistance Commission (EAC) advised that the two separate awards were amended into a single grant with an indefinite period of performance. As instructed by the EAC, these funds may be used to replace voting equipment that utilizes a voter-verified paper record; implement a post-election audit system that provides a high-level confidence in the accuracy of the final vote tally; upgrade election-related computer systems to address cyber vulnerabilities identified through the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or similar scans or assessments of existing election systems; facilitate cybersecurity training for the state Chief Election Official's office and local election officials; implement established cybersecurity best practices for election systems; and fund other activities that will improve the security of elections for federal office. Since 2019, these funds have been used to assist 49 out of 82 counties in upgrading their voting machines and improving their local elections.

Voting Machine Modernization Act Grant. In the 2022 legislative session, the Mississippi Legislature instituted an $8,700,000 grant for counties to upgrade their current voting systems to voting systems that utilize a voter-verifiable paper ballot. All counties will be required to implement voting systems that utilize a voter-verifiable paper ballot by January 1, 2024. The Secretary of State was charged with the implementation and management of the grant program to the various counties. The Agency has developed procedures to ensure proper implementation of the grant program and will continue to properly administer the grant to ensure compliance with all provisions.

Ongoing improvements to voter education programs. As Mississippi's Chief Election Official, the Secretary of State understands the importance of voters being well informed about the election process and the candidates they are voting for. To improve voter education throughout the state, the Agency will develop a webpage that provides a central location for voters to find out more information about candidates, such as political office sought, party affiliation, statements by candidates, and how to get in contact with candidates. The Agency will also implement tools on Y'all Vote to allow voters to check the status of their absentee or affidavit ballot. The Agency has also developed a voter registration toolkit, which provides information on laws governing voter registration and helpful tips for those who would like to establish their own voter registration drive.

Ongoing Improvements to the Statewide Elections Management System. Maintaining a secure and accurate voter registration system is of utmost importance to our office. A secure ballot delivery system will be developed for the SEMS application to facilitate overseas citizens, as well as military personnel stationed throughout the United States or abroad, and others who qualify under Mississippi law. GIS capabilities will be added to SEMS to improve accuracy and facilitate tasks such as redistricting, reporting, and the production of maps.

Online submission of securities notice filings began in 2003. Over the past five years, as platforms became available, the Agency has increased its utilization to make electronic filing of offerings more widely available. We will continue our work to add three more filed offering types that can be electronically processed automatically.

5. External / Internal Assessment & Internal Management Systems

5.1 External/Internal Assessment

- Changes in the economy, whether positive or negative, may affect the number of business filings processed – which may increase or decrease Business Services revenues.
- Legislative directives may change the course of projects and priorities. (Examples – Voter ID legislation, Help America Vote Act, Campaign Finance, The Vulnerable Adults Act, etc.)
- As more database hacking and network insecurities rise, IT costs follow this trend. The Agency has a strong focus on protecting sensitive information and will adopt and implement the latest cybersecurity products and practices needed to secure data in the Agency's custody.

5.2 Internal Management Systems

Through ongoing quantitative and qualitative assessments, agency leadership determines how well the needs of our constituents have been met. Management policies are in place to closely monitor and address deficits in performance. The Agency has partially implemented paperless systems and automated processes to ensure consistent standards and will continue to develop and deploy technologies and methodologies aiding in this effort.

6. Agency Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Measures by Program

PROGRAM #1 - BUSINESS SERVICES

BUSINESS SERVICES (BS) GOAL A

To provide a wide range of services to individuals and companies who conduct business in Mississippi, including those starting a business within the state.

BS OBJECTIVE #A1:
Timely and accurately file all corporate, LLC, partnership, and other business documents to allow new and existing businesses to complete business transactions within the state.

Outcome: All corporate business documents filed and posted to the Agency website.

A1.1 STRATEGY
Output - Number of corporate and other business documents filed.
Efficiency – Corporate documents filed on the website within two business days.
Explanatory - To ensure our turnaround time is among the fastest in the nation.

BS OBJECTIVE #A2:
Timely and accurately file all Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) documents to allow lenders and borrowers the security necessary to conduct business in Mississippi.

Outcome: All UCC documents filed and posted to the Agency website.

A2.1 STRATEGY
Output – Number of UCC documents filed.
Efficiency – UCC documents posted on website within two business days.
Explanatory - To ensure our turnaround time is among the fastest in the nation.

A2.2 STRATEGY
Output – Number of UCC searches requested and completed.
Efficiency – UCC searches completed within two business days.
Explanatory - To ensure our turnaround time is among the fastest in the nation.

BS OBJECTIVE #A3
Timely and accurately file other Mississippi business documents submitted to our office.

Outcome: All other business documents completed and returned to customer.

A3.1 STRATEGY
Output – Number of notary and apostille registrations and applications processed.
Efficiency – Notary/Apostille applications processed within two business days.
Explanatory - To ensure our turnaround time is among the fastest in the nation.

BS OBJECTIVE #A4
Provide excellent customer service to those doing business in Mississippi.

Outcome: All inquiries answered timely and accurately.

A4.1 STRATEGY
Output – Number of phone calls received.
Efficiency – Answer at least 95% of all business services customer phone calls.
Explanatory - To ensure customers are assisted without delay and are never unnecessarily placed on hold.

A4.2 STRATEGY
Output – Number of work orders (other business searches) requested and completed.
Efficiency – Work orders completed within two business days.
Explanatory - To ensure our turnaround time is among the fastest in the nation.

BUSINESS SERVICES (BS) GOAL B

To create an efficient government agency to regulate business-related matters assigned under the Agency's purview: charitable organizations and fundraisers, the sale of securities and securities dealers, scrap metal dealers and processors, the pre-need funeral industry, perpetual care cemeteries, and other regulatory matters.

BS OBJECTIVE #B1:
Register and regulate all charitable organizations and fundraisers who solicit contributions in Mississippi.

Outcome: All charity and fundraiser documents filed and posted to the Agency website.

B1.1 STRATEGY
Output – Number of Charity/Fundraiser registrations and renewals processed.
Efficiency – Registrations and renewals posted to the website as soon as approved.

BS OBJECTIVE #B2: Charities
Investigate charity complaints and/or violations of the State's charitable laws and levy fines or dissolve charities, when necessary.

Outcome: All examinations and investigations performed timely.

B2.1 STRATEGY
Output – Number of examinations, investigations, and complaints.
Efficiency – Contact complainant within two business days.
Explanatory – Within 2 business days of receiving complaint, an investigation case is opened.

BS OBJECTIVE #B3: Securities
Register and regulate both the sale of securities and the securities professionals who sell them.

Outcome: All securities documents filed and posted to the Agency website.

B3.1 STRATEGY
Output – Number of security registrations and renewals (offerings).
Efficiency – Offerings reviewed within five business days of receipt of complete security document package.
Explanatory – To ensure expedient review to facilitate capital formation.

B3.2 STRATEGY
Output – Number of security registrations and renewals (firms/agents).
Efficiency – Firms/agents reviewed within 10 business days of receipt of complete security document package.
Explanatory – To ensure expedient review to support new securities business.

BS OBJECTIVE #B4: Securities
Investigate securities complaints and/or violations of the State's securities laws and levy fines. When necessary, work with federal and state prosecuting authorities to investigate violators of the State's securities laws.

Outcome: All examinations and investigations performed timely.

B4.1 STRATEGY
Output – Number of examinations, investigations, and complaints.
Output – Number of legal actions (actions, dispositions, or complaints) completed.
Efficiency – Contact complainant within two business days.
Explanatory – To efficiently and effectively initiate investigations and work toward their rapid resolutions.

BS OBJECTIVE #B5: Regulation and Enforcement
Register and regulate scrap metal dealers and processors, the pre-need funeral industry, perpetual care cemeteries, and athlete agents. Publish Mississippi Administrative Bulletin and Mississippi Administrative Code.

Outcome: All regulatory documents filed and posted to the Agency website.

B5.1 STRATEGY
Output – Number of scrap metal dealers and processors registered.
Output – Number of pre-need establishments and agents registered.
Output – Number of perpetual care cemeteries registered.
Output – Number of athlete agents registered.
Efficiency – All regulatory documents processed within 2 days.
Explanatory - To ensure our turnaround time is among the fastest in the nation.

BS OBJECTIVE #B6: Regulation and Enforcement
Investigate complaints and/or violations involving scrap metal dealers and processors, the pre-need funeral industry, perpetual care cemeteries, and athlete agents. Suspend, deny, and revoke licenses, freeze trust funds, issue cease and desist orders, refer for criminal prosecution, and levy fines when necessary.

Outcome: All examinations and investigations performed timely.

B6.1 STRATEGY
Output – Number of examinations, investigations, and complaints.
Efficiency – Contact complainant within two business days.
Explanatory - To ensure complainants know their complaints are important.

PROGRAM #2 – ELECTIONS

ELECTIONS GOAL A

Train local elections officials as required by law.

ELECTIONS OBJECTIVE #A1:
Train local elections officials who run elections in Mississippi.

Outcome: Train local elections officials on responsibilities in conducting elections at the local level.

A1.1 STRATEGY
Output – Number of Election Training Sessions.
Output – Number of Poll Workers to successfully complete online training.
Efficiency – Required attendees complete training and assessment.
Efficiency – Percentage of poll workers who successfully complete the online training on their first attempt.
Explanatory – Number/Type of elections occurring.

ELECTIONS GOAL B

Ensure public access to campaign finance and lobbyist reports filed with the Agency.

ELECTIONS OBJECTIVE #B1:
Timely process and make publicly available all required campaign finance and lobbyist filings and reports.

Outcome: Public access to campaign finance and lobbyist reports.

B1.1 STRATEGY
Output - Number of campaign finance reports.
Output – Number of lobbyist reports.
Efficiency – Percentage of reports posted to the Agency website within two business days of receipt.

ELECTIONS GOAL C

Ensure public access to accurate voter information and elections information.

ELECTIONS OBJECTIVE #C1:
Timely provision of voter and election information to members of the public, as requested.

Outcome: Provide timely and accurate voter and election information to the public.

C1.1 STRATEGY
Output - Number of voter registrations updated on secure online website.
Efficiency – Percentage of elections hotline calls answered within one week of an election.

PROGRAM #3 – COMMUNICATION & PUBLICATIONS

COMMUNICATION & PUBLICATIONS GOAL A

Produce and distribute official state publications, including the General Laws, Local & Private Laws, House and Senate Journals, and the Judiciary Directory and Court Calendar, as well as the Official and Statistical Register of the State of Mississippi, more commonly known as the Blue Book.

COMMUNICATION & PUBLICATIONS OBJECTIVE #A1:
To produce and distribute official state publications, agency publications, and other internal educational and meeting materials in a timely and accurate manner.

Outcome: State officials and public are updated with the most current publications, materials, and information in a timely and accurate manner.

A1.1 STRATEGY
Output – Number of website/online postings of new materials.
Output – Agency promotions and exhibits.
Output – Non-statutorily required publications and documents produced.
Output - Statutorily required publications and documents produced.
Output – Number of bills chaptered and recorded.
Efficiency – Statutorily required documents published by the established date.
Explanatory - Aligns with our mission of making government more accessible and transparent.

COMMUNICATION & PUBLICATIONS GOAL B

To oversee educational, outreach and constituent programs, including the Promote the Vote education program for K-12 students.

COMMUNICATION & PUBLICATIONS OBJECTIVE #B1:
Educate Mississippians on Agency services and other outreach topics.

Outcome: Make government more accessible and transparent via all agency websites.

B1.1 STRATEGY
Output – Number of visits to the Secretary of State's website.
Efficiency – New information added to the website within 2 days.
Explanatory - To ensure Mississippians have easily accessible and accurate information at their fingertips.

PROGRAM #4 - PUBLIC LANDS

PUBLIC LANDS GOAL A

To return fair value for state-owned leased land and ensure that current and future generations have access to the State's abundant natural resources through restoration, protection, conservation, and wise development of those resources.

PUBLIC LANDS OBJECTIVE #A1:
Manage the Public Trust Tidelands, including fast lands and submerged lands, through application of conservation, preservation, and protection policies and principles to preserve and maintain their ecosystems and to prevent their despoliation and destruction.

Outcome: Lease Public Trust Tidelands, where appropriate, to generate revenue for the disbursement by the Legislature through the Department of Marine Resources for programs and projects relating to conservation, reclamation, preservation, acquisition, education, and enhancement of public access to the tidelands.

A1.1 STRATEGY
Output – Number of Tidelands leases managed.
Efficiency – Collection of leasehold rents or assessments within 30 days or assess a late penalty.
Efficiency – Collection of leasehold rents or assessments within 90 days or cancel the lease.
Explanatory - Invoice the "For Rent" leases approximately 30 days before the annual rent due date; lessees have thirty days after the due date to pay without penalty or interest. If not paid within the thirty days, we invoice the rent and penalty. If not paid within the second thirty days, we invoice the second penalty and give the ten-days' notice pursuant to the lease terms that the lease will be canceled absent payment of rent and penalties.

PUBLIC LANDS OBJECTIVE #A2:
Oversee management and leasing of more than 640,000 acres of 16th section public school trust lands by 101 local school districts by working cooperatively with the Mississippi Forestry Commission to manage the timber lands.

Outcome: Conserve, preserve, protect, and manage 16th section public lands in Mississippi.

A2.1 STRATEGY

Output – Publish notices of public bids for hunting and fishing leases, agricultural leases, and mineral leases on 16th section public school trust lands.

Output – Number of 16th section leases managed.

Output – Keep property records up to date on the Secretary of State's Office website at www.sos.ms.gov.

Efficiency – Review of leases with an average turnaround time of less than 10 business days.

Explanatory – These outputs help to make sure we meet objective A2 by staying current with leases and providing school districts quick turnaround on lease review.

PUBLIC LANDS GOAL B

Return properties forfeited to the State for non-payment of taxes to productive use by generating tax revenue for local tax rolls through the sale to individuals, businesses, or state agencies.

PUBLIC LANDS OBJECTIVE #B1:
Return parcels to productive use on the local tax rolls.

Outcome: Timely and accurately process applications for tax-forfeited land purchases.

B1.1 STRATEGY

Output – Number of tax-forfeited applications processed.

Output – 500 tax-forfeited properties sold.

Efficiency – Tax-forfeited parcels from availability to completed sale and patent within 60 days.

Explanatory – The more tax-forfeited properties sold; the better tax income generated for local government.

PROGRAM #5 - SUPPORT SERVICES

SUPPORT SERVICES GOAL A

To create and maintain an environment of support to Agency employees, customers, and vendors, while modeling efficient and effective operations and prudent resource management in support of the functions and duties of the Agency.

SUPPORT SERVICES OBJECTIVE #A1:
Provide administrative and technical support to allow Agency employees to function at the highest level.

Outcome: Agency supported by administrative, executive, and technical staff.

A1.1 STRATEGY

Output – Number of payments processed.

Output – Number of technical services help desk requests resolved.

Output – Number of pieces of mail processed.

Output – Support Services less than or equal to 27% Total Agency Expenditures.

Efficiency – Payments processed within an average of less than 10 working days of invoice receipt.

Efficiency – Technical help desk calls answered, and tickets closed within an average of less than five business days.

Efficiency – Mail processed within an average of less than one working day of mailroom receipt.

Explanatory – Number of Support Services staff members employed by the Agency.