

# GENERAL INFORMATION

*To understand the world, you must first  
understand a place like Mississippi.*

— WILLIAM FAULKNER —

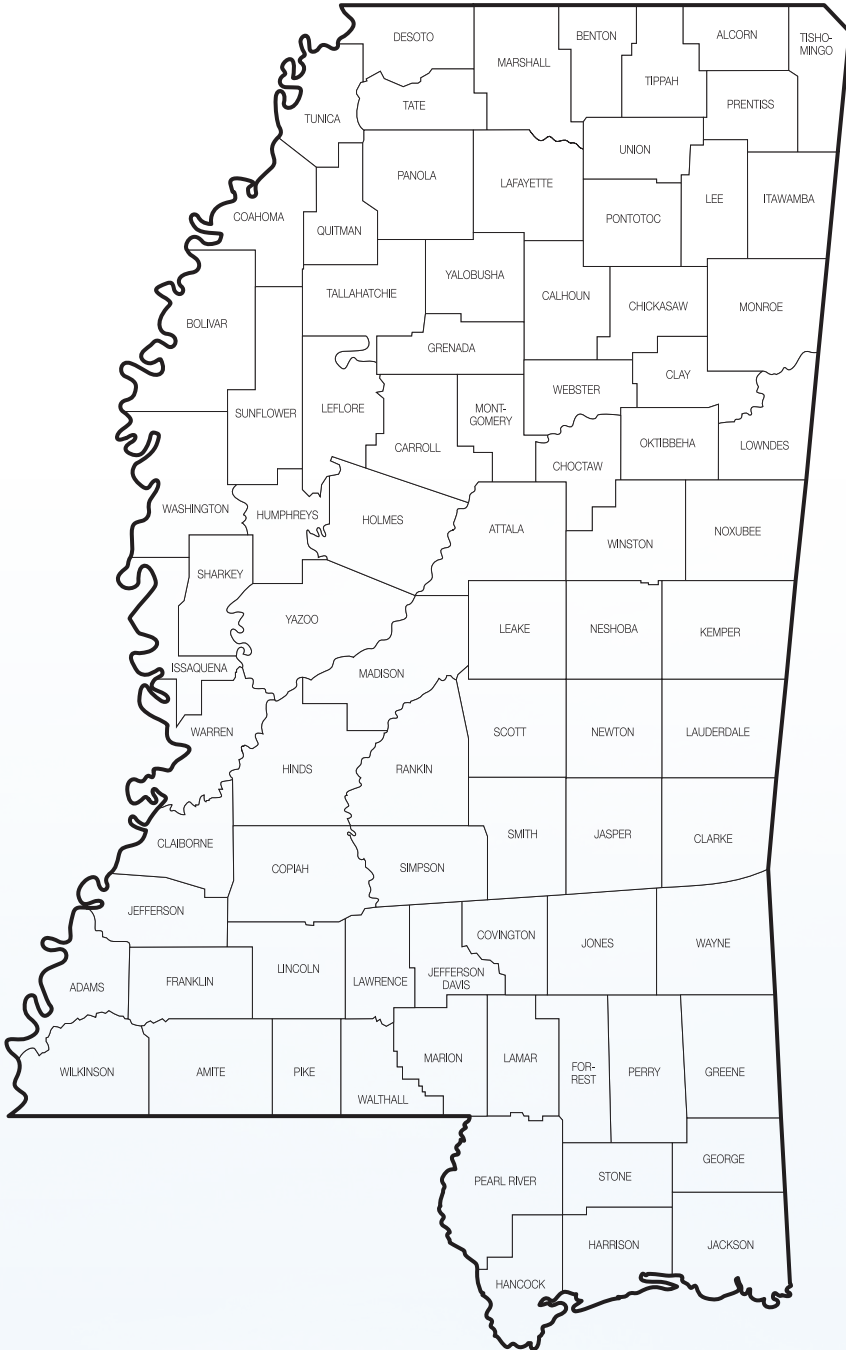


# General Information



|   |    |
|---|----|
| State Map .....                             | 9  |
| State Symbols .....                         | 10 |
| State Flag                                  |    |
| Pledge to the Mississippi Flag              |    |
| Great Seal of the State of Mississippi      |    |
| Mississippi Coat-of-Arms                    |    |
| State Flower and Tree                       |    |
| State Soil                                  |    |
| State Dance                                 |    |
| State Grand Opera House                     |    |
| State Museums                               |    |
| Official State Language                     |    |
| State Motto                                 |    |
| Other Symbols                               |    |
| State Song                                  |    |
| State Government Organizational Chart ..... | 17 |

# STATE OF MISSISSIPPI



# MISSISSIPPI STATE SYMBOLS

## MISSISSIPPI'S STATE FLAG

On June 20, 2020, Mississippi officially retired the 1894 state flag and replaced it with the “In God We Trust” flag voted on and approved by 73% of Mississippi voters.

### Waves of Change

Since the early 2000s, rumblings of change were perpetual due to the inclusion of the Confederate symbol in the 1894 flag. A heightened push to change the flag was renewed in 2015, supported by U.S. Senators Roger Wicker and Thad Cochran, along with high-ranking state legislators, businesses, organizations, community leaders, and others, both inside and outside of Mississippi. Some universities across the state also voted to stop flying the 1894 state flag.

In 2016, more than a dozen bills supporting the change were presented to the state legislature, yet none made it out of committee. After years of lawsuits, threatened lawsuits, and hearing the voices of many citizens who wished to eliminate the stigma attached to the divisive flag, the ripple effect of desired change surged in 2020.

On June 30, 2020, Governor Tate Reeves approved House Bill 1796, under which a Commission to Redesign the Mississippi State Flag was formed and charged with finding a new state flag design no later than September 14, 2020.

Stipulations in the act stated that any proposed design must include the words “In God We Trust” and must not contain the Confederate battle emblem. The bill also called for the Mississippi Department of Archives and History to develop a plan to remove the 1894 flag from public buildings across the state and provide the commission with administrative support.

On July 13, 2020, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History invited the public to submit new state flag designs. The commission received nearly 3,000 submissions. After several rounds of cuts, the commission narrowed the choices down to a final design, which was submitted for public vote as a ballot measure during the November 3, 2020, General Election. The “In God We Trust” design, featuring a magnolia flower and stars, was approved by 73% of Mississippi voters.

On January 5, 2021, the first day of the 2021 Legislative Session, the Mississippi House of Representatives voted 119-1 to pass House Bill 1 (HB 1), a bill designed to codify the new state flag into Mississippi law. The state Senate pushed the bill forward on January 6 with a 43-7 vote in favor of the new design. Governor Reeves made the historic change official by adding his signature to HB 1 on January 11, 2021.

## PLEDGE TO THE MISSISSIPPI FLAG

**“I salute the flag of Mississippi and the sovereign state for which it stands with pride in her history and achievements and with confidence in her future under the guidance of Almighty God.”**

Miss. Code Ann. § 37-13-7 (1972)

### About the “In God We Trust” Flag Design

The “In God We Trust” flag layout, originally named the “New Magnolia Flag,” was designed by Rocky Vaughan with support from Sue Anna Joe, Kara Giles, and Dominique Pugh (who illustrated the magnolia). Micah Whitson was also credited with adding the Native American star.

As described by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, “The New Magnolia flag is anchored in the center field by a clean and modern Magnolia blossom, a symbol long-used to represent our state and the hospitality of our citizens. The New Magnolia also represents Mississippi’s sense of hope and rebirth, as the Magnolia often blooms more than once and has a long blooming season. The New Magnolia is sleek and updated to represent the forward progression of Mississippi. The circle of twenty stars represents Mississippi as the twentieth state of the United States of America and is anchored by the gold five-point star, which stands alone. This star represents our first peoples, the indigenous Native American tribes of the land that would become Mississippi. The color blue in the main field of the flag echoes the blue of the American flag, representing vigilance, justice, perseverance, while the bands of red represent hardiness and valor. The gold lines and the gold stamen of the New Magnolia are a nod to the rich cultural history of Mississippi, specifically the visual arts, literature, music, and performing arts to originate in our state.”



# MISSISSIPPI STATE SYMBOLS



## THE GREAT SEAL OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

The State Seal is described in the Laws of the State of Mississippi, First Session, First General Assembly, 1817-1818: "The seal of this state, the inscription of which shall be 'the great seal of the State of Mississippi' around the margin, and in the center an eagle, with the olive branch and quiver of arrows in his claws," and has been in use since Mississippi became a state in 1817. The Great Seal was amended by an act of the 2014 Legislature to include the words "In God We Trust."

## STATE LANGUAGE

English was designated the official language of the State in Chapter 439, General Laws of Mississippi 1987.

## STATE MOTTO

"Virtute et Armis" – a Latin phrase which translates "By Valor and Arms" – has not been adopted by the Legislature as an official motto as such, but has appeared on the State Coat-of-Arms since 1894. It was suggested by James Rhea Preston, a former Mississippi Superintendent of Education.

The Mississippi motto supposedly has its roots and inspiration from another motto created by Lord Gray de Wilton, "Virtute Non Armis Fido," which means, "I trust in virtue, not arms."



## MISSISSIPPI'S COAT-OF-ARMS

In 1894, the Legislature declared the design above as official, but upon revision of the Mississippi Code in 1906, the original law was not brought forward. In May 2000, the Supreme Court ruled Mississippi did not have an official Coat-of-Arms. Governor Ronnie Musgrove appointed a 17-member commission in order to study the issue which ultimately made the recommendation for the re-adoption of the Coat-of-Arms.

Governor Ronnie Musgrove signed Senate Bill 2285 into law on February 7, 2001, making the design the official Mississippi Coat-of-Arms:

*"... a shield, blue in color, with an eagle upon it with extended pinions, holding in the right talon a palm branch and bundle of arrows in the left, with the word 'Mississippi' above the eagle; the lettering on the shield and the eagle to be in gold; below the shield two (2) branches of the cotton stalk, saltier wise, and a scroll below extending upward and on each side three-fourths (3/4) of the length of the shield; upon the scroll, which is to be red, the motto to be printed in gold letters upon white spaces, the motto to be 'Virtute et Armis'; this being the same Coat-of-Arms adopted by the Legislature in Chapter 37, Laws of the Extraordinary Session of 1894."*

# MISSISSIPPI STATE SYMBOLS



## STATE FLOWER AND TREE

An election was held in November 1900 to select a State Flower. Votes were submitted by 23,278 school children. The magnolia received 12,745 votes, the cotton blossom 4,171, and the cape jasmine 2,484. A few votes were for other flowers. The magnolia was officially designated as the State Flower by the 1952 Legislature. In 1935, the Director of Forestry started a movement to select a State Tree for Mississippi. The tree was to be nominated and elected by school children of the state.

Four nominations were made: the magnolia, oak, pine, and dogwood. The magnolia received the majority. On April 1, 1938, the Mississippi Legislature officially designated the magnolia as the State Tree in Chapter 366, Laws of Mississippi 1938.



## STATE SOIL

Natchez Silt Loam (*Typic Eutrudepts*) was designated the State Soil of Mississippi in Chapter 360, General Laws of 2003.



## STATE DANCE

The square dance was adopted as the American folk dance of Mississippi, Chapter 303, General Laws of Mississippi 1995.



## STATE GRAND OPERA HOUSE

The Grand Opera House of Meridian was designated the State Grand Opera House in Chapter 313, General Laws of Mississippi 1993.



## STATE MUSEUMS

The Mississippi Code Ann. (1972) identifies Tupelo Automobile Museum as the State Automobile Museum, the Mississippi Industrial Heritage Museum as the State Historical Industrial Museum, and the State Wildlife Heritage Museum in Leland as the Wildlife Heritage Museum.

## OTHER OFFICIAL DESIGNATIONS



### STATE BIRD

Found in all sections of Mississippi, the Mockingbird was selected as the official State Bird by the Women's Federated Clubs and by the state legislature in 1944.



### STATE REPTILE

The American Alligator (*Alligator Mississippiensis*) was designated the State Reptile by Senate Bill 2060, which was adopted by the Mississippi Legislature during the 2005 Regular Session.



### STATE WATER MAMMAL

An act designating the bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*), commonly called the porpoise, as the State Water Mammal was approved April 12, 1974, as Chapter 551, General Laws of Mississippi of 1974.



### STATE FISH

The largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*) was designated the State Fish of Mississippi, Chapter 551, General Laws of Mississippi of 1974.



### STATE BUTTERFLY

An act designating the spicebush swallowtail (*Pterourus troilus*) as the State Butterfly of Mississippi was approved in 1991, as Chapter 315 of the General Laws of Mississippi.



### STATE WILDFLOWER

The Coreopsis was designated the State Wildflower in 1991, Chapter 339 of the General Laws of Mississippi.



## OTHER OFFICIAL DESIGNATIONS



### STATE INSECT

The honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) was designated the State Insect of Mississippi in Chapter 317, General Laws of Mississippi of 1980.



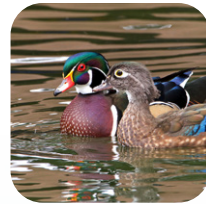
### STATE FOSSIL

A Senate Concurrent Resolution designating the prehistoric whale as the State Fossil was adopted March 26, 1981.



### STATE STONE

A Senate Concurrent Resolution designating petrified wood as the State Stone was adopted May 14, 1976.



### STATE WATERFOWL

The wood duck (*Aix sponsa*) was designated the State Waterfowl of Mississippi in Chapter 551, General Laws of Mississippi of 1974.



### STATE SHELL

An act designating the oyster shell (*Crassostrea virginica*) as the State Shell was approved April 12, 1974, as Chapter 551, General Laws of Mississippi of 1974.



### STATE BEVERAGE

An act to designate milk as the State Beverage was adopted by the Mississippi Legislature during the 1984 Regular Session, in Chapter 394, General Laws of Mississippi.



### STATE TOY

The Teddy Bear was designated the state toy of Mississippi in Chapter 361, General Laws of Mississippi 2003, in recognition of Mississippi's connection to the origin of the Teddy Bear, inspired by President Theodore Roosevelt's bear hunt in the Delta.

## OTHER OFFICIAL DESIGNATIONS



### STATE FRUIT

The Blueberry was designated the State Fruit by House Bill 1027, which was adopted by the Mississippi Legislature during the 2023 Regular Session.



### STATE GEMSTONE

The Opal was designated the State Gemstone by Senate Bill 2138, which was adopted by the Mississippi Legislature during the 2023 Regular Session.



### STATE HORSE

The American Quarter Horse was designated the State Horse by Senate Bill 2142, which was adopted by the Mississippi Legislature during the 2024 Regular Session.



### STATE TURTLE

The Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle was designated the State Turtle by Senate Bill 2918, which was adopted by the Mississippi Legislature during the 2024 Regular Session.



### STATE LAND MAMMALS

The white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) was designated the State Land Mammal of Mississippi by Chapter 551, General Laws of Mississippi of 1974. The red fox was also named State Land Mammal in the 1997 Legislative Session.



### STATE SONG

"One Mississippi" by Steve Azar was designated the Official State Song by House Bill 453, which was signed into law on April 14, 2022.

# MISSISSIPPI STATE GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

