

NEWS RELEASE

Office of Commissioner Brandon Presley MISSISSIPPI PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION NORTHERN DISTRICT

Presley Introduces Cutting-Edge “Hire Mississippi” Utility Contracting Rule to Jumpstart Mississippi Economy and help Mississippi Contractors

Jackson, Mississippi (May 4, 2017) – Thursday’s monthly open meeting of the Public Service Commission saw the Commission take a bold, aggressive step to help boost the Mississippi economy and help Mississippi based companies. Public Service Commission Chairman Brandon Presley (D-Nettleton) introduced the “Hire Mississippi Rule”, a mandate requiring rate regulated, investor-owned utilities to greatly expand how they offer contracting and business opportunities to Mississippi based companies seeking to contract with the billions of dollars a year companies spend on operations, maintenance and construction. Presley’s stated goal in writing the rule was to give fair and equal access to Mississippi based companies and greater transparency in how contracts are awarded. The net result ...requiring equal access and greater transparency for companies who call Mississippi home and hire Mississippians.

“I am so sick and tired of seeing out of state car tags on construction sites in my Mississippi when I know that Mississippians are footing the bill for those projects. I have zero doubt that MISSISSIPPI companies could be doing that work if they were given the chance,” Presley said. “My goal is to tear down the glass wall surrounding these multi-million dollar contracts and give Mississippi companies the chance at getting that work.”

Perhaps the most important innovation in the rule is the creation of the Hire Mississippi List. At least four times a year, the utilities will be required to publish notice in newspapers across their territory requesting that local contractors submit their business to be on the list. Mississippi companies on the Hire Mississippi List will receive additional notification of any known upcoming bids for contracts over \$200,000 within the scope of goods or services they furnish. Further, no contract will be awarded to any prime contractor without the utility first providing the prime contractor the utility’s Hire Mississippi List for consideration in awarding subcontracts. The Hire Mississippi List will give utilities and ratepayers the advantage of a more competitive bid process and will provide additional, state-specific information to increase transparency in bidding.



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The rule requires that utilities proactively reach out and assist potential Mississippi contractors by explaining the bidding process, qualifications and other procurement practices and procedures. It requires that certain big contracts be broken up into separate, smaller scoped contracts to accommodate more bidders. Importantly, the Rule also requires that in filings before the Commission, if an out-of-state firm is selected for a project, the company must explain how they reached that decision. The Commission will annually review compliance with all aspects of the Hire Mississippi Rule.

The Commission anticipates that the Hire Mississippi Rule will have far-reaching significance for economic development in the state. As Mississippians are given greater and more transparent access to the massive economies of the public utility industry, students will begin to envision new career paths that induce them to remain in Mississippi, businesses will form with the knowledge that due consideration will be given to their bids, communities will see jobs and infrastructure come that may not have otherwise, and the state will see all of this growth develop into increased revenue to fund its government.

“I see the Hire Mississippi Rule as just a common sense thing to do for our people and our state. It is about equal access, transparency and growing the pie. And it’s high time we start looking out for our own friends and neighbors who are on the cusp of success but just can’t make that last hurdle because they don’t know the “right” people. Well, they know their Public Service Commissioners and we will not let them slip by the wayside anymore from this day forward,” Presley concluded.

Presley’s proposed rule has already attracted the support of the Associated Builders and Contractors.