

FACT SHEET

Revenue Options For Mississippi's Fiscal Crisis

KEY TAKEAWAY:

While the recession is over, its effects are still being felt by the thousands of families in the state who are still out of work and for state revenue collections that have yet to rebound. State agencies that have been dealt successive years of budget cuts are struggling to provide services just when Mississippi's families need them most.

For the state to be competitive when prosperity returns, Mississippi must take a balanced approach that includes raising revenues. Four options to raise revenue include updating sales, personal and corporate income taxes and temporarily reducing tax expenditures. These four options could generate over \$370 million in additional revenue for the General Fund.

Recommendations for a Balanced Approach that Includes Raising Revenue

For the state to be competitive when prosperity returns, Mississippi needs to take a balanced approach that includes raising revenues. Table 1 provides a summary of the revenue recommendations outlined in this policy brief. A cuts-only strategy hurts working families, hurts the economy, and limits our ability to invest in the state's people. An overview of the revenue raising recommendations is found below.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF REVENUE RECOMMENDATIONS	
Revenue Proposal	Estimated Annual Revenue
Update The Sales Tax Base	\$98 Million
Update The Personal Income Tax by Adding 6% and 7.5% Brackets	\$117 Million
Updating The Corporate Income Tax by Adding 6% and 7.5% Brackets	\$150 Million
Temporarily Reduce Certain Tax Expenditures	\$6.3 Million
Total	\$371.3 Million

UPDATE THE SALES TAX

ESTIMATED REVENUE: \$98 MILLION

Mississippi's sales tax was originally structured to capture the purchase of goods. As the economy has evolved, more Mississippians are also buying services.

- By expanding the sales tax to include more services, the state would generate additional revenue and spread out the tax burden on working families.

- Sales taxes in Mississippi are applied on all goods unless they are specifically exempt in law. Goods include items like food, clothing, motor vehicles, and household items. Services are only subject to the sales tax if they are specifically listed in law.

- In 2008, the Mississippi Tax Study Commission recommended, in part, expanding the sales tax base on services by adding 21 services. Adding these services would raise an estimated \$98 million annually. A comprehensive sales tax on all services purchased by households would raise an estimated \$287 million annually.

FACT SHEET

Revenue Options For Mississippi's Fiscal Crisis (cont.)

UPDATE THE PERSONAL AND CORPORATE INCOME TAX

ESTIMATED REVENUE: \$267 MILLION

As a percent of personal income, income taxes paid in Mississippi are among the lowest in the country. By adding another bracket, the state would generate additional revenue while taking into consideration the ability of working families to pay the tax.

- The state's income tax brackets have not been updated in over 25 years. The highest tax bracket of 5% starts at a low \$10,000 of taxable income. With standard exemptions and deductions for a family of four with two children, this would mean the top bracket starts when a family makes over \$29,600 of income.

- While income tax rates have remained the same, in the last two decades the top 20% of income earners have experienced over twice the rate of income growth of the bottom and middle 20% of earners in Mississippi.

- Adding a new state income tax bracket of 6% over \$45,000 of taxable income (total income of \$64,400 for a family of four with two children) and 7.5% over \$100,000 would update the income tax to capture areas of growth in the state's economy while taking into account the ability of working families to pay the tax. The two new brackets for the personal income tax are estimated to raise \$117 million in revenue.¹

- Corporate and personal income tax brackets are the same as established in law. An updated 6 percent bracket on corporate taxable income over \$45,000 and 7.5% over \$100,000 could raise about \$150 million annually in Mississippi.

TEMPORARY TAX EXPENDITURE REDUCTION

ESTIMATED REVENUE TO REMAIN IN GENERAL FUND: \$6.3 MILLION

Much like appropriations, tax incentives constitute another type of expenditure by reducing the money available for funding state services. Similar to budget cuts, tax incentives could be reduced by a percentage to increase money available in the General Fund.

- Mississippi provides a number of corporate income tax credits and franchise tax credits. The most recent Tax Expenditure Report estimated that the state provided over \$63 million in income tax and franchise tax incentives for FY 2011.

- The Governor's Tax Study Commission of 2008 recommended a regular review process for tax incentives to monitor their effectiveness. Currently, for some of these tax incentives, outcome data are not readily available to the public, and in some cases to policy makers.

- In addition to a more long-term regular review of the effectiveness of tax expenditures, in the short term tax incentive expenditures could be considered in addition to budget reductions. This would entail "rolling back" tax incentives by a certain percent temporarily. A 10% reduction would provide an additional \$6.3 million for the state budget, while a 25% reduction would provide an estimated \$15.8 million.

¹ Note: This brief revises the estimate of revenue generated from a change in the personal income tax brackets reported in previous policy papers. The new estimate is derived from the most current data.