
MLBC
MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS
EST. 1976
MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS
2026 Retreat
THEME:
Protecting Our Voice.
SEPTEMBER 16-20, 2026
GREENVILLE, MS
GREENVILLE
MISSISSIPPI
OUR COMMUNITIES. | OUR MAPS. | OUR FUTURE.

Honoring Mississippi's Black Legislators

Celebrating leadership, service, and progress across the Magnolia State.



A tribute to the Black members of the Mississippi Legislature.



Chairman's Welcome

Hello Friends & Colleagues,

It is my distinct honor to welcome you to our 2026 Annual Retreat in Greenville, the heart of the Mississippi Delta. The Delta represents the resilience, strength, faith, and rich cultural heritage of our people. It is fitting that we gather here to renew our commitment to serving as the unapologetic voice of the 1.2 million Black Mississippians at the State Capitol.

This year's theme, "Protecting Our Voice," speaks directly to the purpose of our Caucus and the urgency of this historical moment. Our voice is our power. It represents our right to vote, our right to equitable representation, and our ability to advocate for the needs and aspirations of Black communities throughout Mississippi.

This retreat provides an important opportunity to strengthen relationships, exchange ideas, and develop a unified vision for the work ahead. We remain especially mindful of the unique challenges facing the Mississippi Delta and the tremendous opportunities to bring meaningful and lasting change to this region.

I extend my sincere appreciation to Mayor Errick D. Simmons and his dedicated city staff for welcoming us with open arms and providing invaluable assistance. We are equally grateful to the kind and accommodating staff of Harlow's Casino Resort for their outstanding hospitality.

To our generous sponsors and community partners, thank you for believing in our mission and investing in this important gathering. Your support strengthens our ability to educate, inspire, empower, and advocate for the communities we proudly represent.

I also thank my legislative colleagues, our invited guests, and every individual who worked behind the scenes to make this retreat possible. May we leave Greenville more united, more focused, and more determined than ever to protect our voice and advance the interests of our people.

In solidarity,
Representative Kabir Karriem

2025-2027 Executive Committee

CHAIRMAN
Rep. Kabir Karriem

TREASURER
Rep. Oscar Denton

VICE CHAIRMAN
Sen. Rod Hickman

PARLIAMENTARIAN
Rep. John Faulkner

SECRETARY
Rep. Zakiya Summers

SARGEANT AT ARMS
Rep. Robert Sanders

ASSISTANT SECRETARY
Rep. Grace Butler-Washington

CHAPLAIN
Sen. Gary Brumfield

September 17, 2026



Dear Chairman Karriem and Members of the Mississippi Legislative Black Caucus (MLBC):

On behalf of the City of Greenville and the people of the Mississippi Delta, it is my distinct honor to welcome the MLBC to Greenville for your 2026 Annual Retreat and our historic Blues Week.

You come to Greenville at an important moment—not only for our city and the Delta, but for the future of Mississippi. This is a moment that calls for movement, collaboration, civic engagement, and action. The challenges before our communities are too great for any city, legislator, institution, or organization to address alone. Progress requires us to work together, listen to the people we serve, and transform conversations into collaborations and collaborations into results.

Greenville is demonstrating what is possible when we do just that. Over the past several years, this administration has secured more than $3.2 billion in transformative public and private investments. But progress cannot be measured by dollars alone. The true measure of investment is its impact on people. It must mean more jobs, stronger small businesses, safer neighborhoods, better infrastructure, greater educational opportunities, healthier families, and pathways to prosperity for people who have too often been left behind.

This convening comes at a critical moment for Mississippi—a moment that calls us to renew our commitment to voter registration, voter education, civic participation, and voter turnout, because the future of our communities will be determined not only in Jackson or Washington, but in our neighborhoods, churches, schools, community centers, and voting precincts. As we gather during Blues Week, we are reminded that the Mississippi Delta has always transformed struggle into strength, pain into purpose, and adversity into possibility.

So my challenge is simple: Let this be more than a meeting-let it become a movement. From conversation to collaboration. From registration to participation. From participation to turnout. From ideas to action. And from opportunity for some to progress and prosperity for all.

Greenville proudly welcomes the MLBC, and may this gathering strengthen partnerships, inspire action, and help build a Mississippi where every community has a voice, every citizen has an opportunity, and every person has a stake in our shared future.

Sincerely,

Errick D. Simmons

Mayor



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WASHINGTON COUNTY
COURTHOUSE
GREENVILLE, MISSISSIPPI 38701

CARL McGEE
PRESIDENT
3RD DISTRICT
P. O. BOX 158
GREENVILLE, MS 38702

LEE GORDON
VICE PRESIDENT
1ST DISTRICT
P. O. BOX 158
GREENVILLE, MS 38702

TOMMY L. BENSON III
2ND DISTRICT
P. O. BOX 158
GREENVILLE, MS 38702

MALA U. BROOKS
4TH DISTRICT
P. O. BOX 158
GREENVILLE, MS 38702

JERRY REDMOND, SR.
5TH DISTRICT
P. O. BOX 158
GREENVILLE, MS 38702

MARILYN HANSELL
CLERK

CHELESA CARTER
ADMINISTRATOR

WILLIE GRIFFIN
ATTORNEY

MARK HOOKER, JR.
COUNTY ENGINEER

Welcome to Washington County, Mississippi

Dear Chairman Karriem and Members of the Mississippi Legislative Black Caucus:

It is with great pleasure and sincere appreciation that I welcome you to Washington County, Mississippi, for your annual retreat meeting.

We are especially pleased to welcome you during a very special week in our community—the 49th Annual Blues Festival, a celebration of the music, culture, and heritage that are deeply woven into the fabric of the Mississippi Delta. The festival is a treasured Washington County tradition and is recognized as the world's longest-running blues festival. What better time to experience the spirit, history, and soul of the Delta than during this extraordinary celebration?

We are honored that you have chosen Washington County as the setting for this important gathering. We hope your time here allows for meaningful dialogue, strategic planning, renewed fellowship, and the strengthening of relationships among members of the Caucus, as well as with community leaders, partners, and others who share a commitment to the future of Mississippi.

Washington County and the Mississippi Delta are communities rich in history, culture, resilience, and tradition. The contributions and accomplishments of African Americans are woven deeply into the story of this region, Mississippi, and our nation. The blues itself is one of the most powerful expressions of that history—a musical tradition born from struggle, perseverance, creativity, and hope that has influenced generations around the world.

As you gather for your retreat, we hope you will experience not only a productive and purposeful meeting, but also the warmth, hospitality, music, culture, and heritage that make Washington County and the Mississippi Delta so unique.

We are honored to have you here during this historic week and hope you enjoy your retreat, our hospitality, and the 49th Annual Blues Festival.

With warmest regards,

Carl McGee,
President, Washington County Board of Supervisors

MBC
MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS
EST. 1976

2026 LEGISLATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Advancing Education Equity and Protecting Public Schools

Emphasizing pre-K and childcare access and defending public funding for public education.

- Expanded **Literacy Interventions** for **4th-8th Grades**
- Established **Math Coaches** for **2nd-6th Grades**
- Added **Mandatory Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Courses** beginning in **2029**
- Added Required **Financial Literacy and Civics Courses**
- Increased **Salaries** of **Teachers** and **Assistant Teachers** by **$2,000; Specialized Staff** by **$4,000; School Attendance Officers** by **$5,000;**
- Addressed **Chronic School Absenteeism**
- Closed **6-week Pay Gap** during Christmas Holiday Break for Teachers
- **Stopped School Choice Legislation**

Proactively Redistricting to Protect and Strengthen Democracy

Safeguarding fair representation and electoral integrity across the state.

- Aggressively **Advocated** for a **True Ballot Initiative Process**
- **Stopped Inequitable Redistricting Maps**

Strengthening Social Safety Nets and Nutrition Supports

Protecting programs like SNAP, rehabilitation services, senior nutrition, and DHS supports.

- Aggressively **Advocated** for **Funding** to **Support Child Care Assistance**

Environmental & Climate Justice

Advancing safe, stable and healthy communities

- Aggressively **Fought** for **Clean Air Protections and Protocols**

Expanding Access to Quality, Affordable Healthcare

Ensuring comprehensive, affordable healthcare for all Mississippians with special emphasis on Black Maternal Health.

- Established the **Fetal & Infant Mortality Review Board**
- Introduced the **Mississippi Maternal Health Legislative Package**, including a diaper sales tax exemption

Protecting and Expanding Voting Rights

Advancing policies that ensure full access to the ballot and strengthen democratic participation.

- Introduced the **Robert G. Clark Mississippi Voting Rights Act**
- **Stopped Suffrage Restoration Panel Constitutional Amendment**
- Aggressively **Advocated** for **Voter Restoration**
- **Restored Voting Rights for 8 Mississippians**

Reforming the Criminal Legal System

Promoting justice, fairness, and rehabilitation throughout Mississippi's courts and correctional systems.

- Established **Protective Equipment** for **Incarcerated Individuals Forced to Work with Cleaning Chemicals**
- **Drew Attention to the Conditions of Parchman Unit 29,** resulting in **rehabilitation of Unit L**
- Aggressively **Fought Against Youth Crime Enhancements**
- **Stopped Unconstitutional Bail Reform Legislation**

HBCU Advocacy

Advancing equitable funding, addressing infrastructure needs, ensuring accountable leadership

- **Garnered Additional Support for HBCU Infrastructure Funding**
- **Stopped Inequitable IHL Funding Formula Changes**

Unstoppable

WWW.MSBLACKCAUCUS.COM

2026 Sponsors

One Voice

FAIR FIGHT ACTION

entergy MISSISSIPPI

Pattern

The Tennie Group LLC™
A Tax & Accounting Firm
AGRICULTURE
"The Agribusiness Way"™

SOUTHERN RURAL BLACK WOMEN'S INITIATIVE
SRBWI

CITY OF GREENVILLE MISSISSIPPI

JULIAN

MLBC Featured Speakers

REP. ROBERT JOHNSON, HOUSE MINORITY LEADER



Rep. Robert L. Johnson III first served as a state senator before becoming a member of the Mississippi House of Representatives from the 94th District, being first elected in 2004. He has been the Minority Leader of the State House since 2020.

Johnson graduated from North Natchez High School and got a scholarship to Washington University in St. Louis. He was there for three years and transferred to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, receiving a degree in political science and urban studies. He received a J.D. from the same school and interned during the summers at the attorney general's office in Mississippi. In 1986, Johnson returned to Mississippi, where he worked for Edwin Pittman in the attorney general's office. He worked for Mike Moore before starting his own private practice in 1989.

He is married to Evelyn Joiner and is of African Methodist Episcopal faith.

WILLIE SIMMONS, CENTRAL DISTRICT TRANSPORTATION COMMISSIONER



Willie Simmons is serving his second term as Central District Transportation Commissioner which covers 22 counties with a population of approximately one million people.

Simmons served as a Mississippi State Senator for more than 26 years. For the last 8 years, he served as Chairman of the Senate Highways and Transportation Committee. Under his leadership in the Senate, over $5B was spent throughout the state on the construction and upgrade of federal and state roads, county and municipal streets and bridges; also, millions of dollars on public transit, ports railroads, airports and other infrastructure support systems. He played an integral role on projects such as the repair of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge in Jackson; the upgrade and repair of Highway 8 in Cleveland; the Highway 82 Bypass in Leland among many others. He also served as Chairman of the Corrections Committee and Vice Chairman of the Public Health and Welfare Committee.

Simmons served as Deputy Commissioner of Corrections prior to joining the Mississippi State Senate. Before that time, he served as a combat veteran of the Vietnam War. He is a graduate of Alcorn State University; and received M. S. Degree and Ed.S. Degree from Delta State University. He is married to Rose Sibley Simmons and they have four children and ten grandchildren.

Thursday's Speaker



DR. BERNEECE S. HERBERT
CHAIR AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF URBAN & REGIONAL PLANNING AT JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

Dr. Berneece S. Herbert is a results-oriented and people-centered professional with more than 20 years of practice, academic, and research experience. She currently serves as the chair of the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at Jackson State University (JSU) in Jackson, Mississippi. Prior to this appointment, Dr. Herbert worked at Alabama A&M University (AAMU) for over 12 years and served as the Interim Chair for the Department of Community & Regional Planning

.

Dr. Herbert's experience and accomplishments include teaching core Urban Planning courses with specialty areas in GIS, Advanced Statistics, and International Development Planning and Policy. She was also the Principal Investigator (PI) for three large USDA-sponsored grants focusing on climate change, food security, and sustainable communities at AAMU. At JSU she is a PI on three research projects on job equity, labor, and climate impacts on maritime transportation infrastructure. She is a member of two consortia with the University of Louisiana and UC Berkeley currently developing proposals to submit to NSF on climate change and impact on vulnerable communities.

She has partnered with numerous agencies, such as Clean Energy States Alliance, 2CMississippi, One Voice, and Jobs to Move America on projects focusing on advancing solar energy, green infrastructure, heat mitigation, energy burden, and community empowerment in underserved and under-represented communities. Dr. Herbert has served on several committees and boards. She serves on the City of Jackson's Board of Construction and on Jackson Public Schools' Facility Repurposing Advisor Committee. She was a lead reviewer for USDA's Local Foods Promotion Program and Farmer's Market Proportion Program. She served as the faculty advisor for AAMU-Toyota joint mobility challenge. She served as the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) Southern Regional Representative to the board for 2021 – 2023. Dr. Herbert was also highlighted by ACSP as a Featured Faculty. She is a member of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory advisory committee on an energy equity project sponsored by DOE. She is also a manuscript reviewer for the Journal of the American Planning Association.

As service to her local community, she functioned as President of the Caribbean Association of North Alabama. She also had the opportunity to be the mentor to one of the winners of the small business innovation grant for the State Department's Young Leaders of America Initiative. Dr. Herbert is spearheading several research and community engagement activities with local organizations in Jackson, MS. Dr. Herbert is currently engaging with FEMA to lead the City of Rolling Fork's Disaster Recovery planning process. Dr. Herbert has recently partnered with Cornell University, Clark Atlanta, and four other HBCUs to work on a grant-funded project on advancing black workers in the South. She is also a faculty liaison for the HBCU Sustainable Communities Initiative funding by UNCF, INROADS and the Thurgood Marshall Fund.

Friday's Speakers



KRISTAL SWIM, EPU DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Kristal Swim is Director of Government Relations for E Pluribus Unum. As senior strategist, she leads efforts to advance the organization's mission and goals across all levels of government. With deep public affairs experience, Kristal was previously Executive Vice President at global agency Allison+Partners overseeing government relations and social justice for corporations, trade associations, and nonprofits. She also managed multiple issue campaigns and ballot initiatives across the country, specializing in issue education, coalition building, thought leadership, alliance development, and advocacy. Kristal is a proud native of eastern Kentucky.



NINA SMITH, FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF POLISOL PUBLIC AFFAIRS, INC.

Nina Smith is a battle-tested communications strategist and storyteller with more than a fifteen years of experience in political communications.

Smith soft launched PoliSol in April 2020, quickly amassing a rolodex of impressive clients. The firm supported Stacey Abrams and the Fair Fight team during the 2020 elections and continues to support the current fight for voting rights to this day. She led media strategy for the introduction of the BREATHE Act for the Movement for Black Lives. The firm also worked to tell the stories of grassroots organizing during the 2020 election cycle including the Joy to the Polls roving concerts, worked with Vote.org to launch youth voting programs with Jaden Smith, and worked with the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee on key battleground races during the 2020 cycle.

Nina served as traveling press secretary for Pete Buttigieg's campaign for president during the 2020 Democratic primary, where she coordinated on-the-ground interviews, briefed, and advised the candidate on messaging, on policies like The Douglass Plan, during debates, and in real time over the course of the campaign.
Prior to joining the Pete for America team, Nina was managing partner and co-owner at Megaphone Strategies -- a not-for-profit, women-owned social justice PR firm that launched Stacey Abrams' run for governor, helped elect Deb Haaland to Congress, trained frontline organizers with the Indigenous Environmental Network, Black Lives Matter Network and the Movement for Black Lives, and launched the She The People and The Collective PAC's organizations and brands during the 2018 cycle.

Smith has represented top officials at the local, state and national levels. She served as deputy press secretary in the Obama Administration at the U.S. Small Business Administration, and has worked as publicist for TheRoot.com. She also served as press secretary for the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Financial Services under Ranking Committee Member Congresswoman Maxine Waters (D-CA). She spent five years working in Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley's communications shop, later serving as chief spokeswoman during his second term. Born and raised in the D.C. metro area, she is a proud graduate of Morgan State University.

Saturday's Speaker



PAM SHAW, PRESIDENT & FOUNDER OF P3 STRATEGIES

A senior manager, entrepreneur, and public policy analyst, Pamela Shaw is a seasoned leader, tactician, organizer and devotee to social justice. She has more than 20 years of experience focused on the health, education and management training and development of children, families and service providers in vulnerable communities and organizations.

Her uncanny capacity to support, communicate with and train key leadership and a disparate array of community constituents on complicated matters of public policy and program development has benefited citizens and organizations with common interests. As a member of a small cadre of persons leading the mid-and-deep South into the new millennium, Pam has a range of knowledge and skills critical to emerging communities, program developers, service providers and policy makers. Her experience includes organizational leadership, training and public speaking. All of which is buttressed by a vast network of skilled professionals that has made her work both compelling and accessible. She is a native Mississippian with degrees from Southern University and the University of Maryland.



THANK YOU, GREENVILLE, FOR WELCOMING US

MISSISSIPPI
LEGISLATIVE
BLACK CAUCUS

READY FOR THE WORK AHEAD.

2026 ANNUAL RETREAT

SEPTEMBER 16-20, 2026

GREENVILLE, MISSISSIPPI



As consequential decisions shape Mississippi's future, MLBC members are convening in Greenville to sharpen strategy and advance priorities on representation, education, healthcare, and economic opportunity.
The work moves forward in Greenville, Mississippi.

JOIN US FOR A PROTECT OUR VOICE TOWN HALL

Wednesday, September 16 | 5:30 p.m.

Elks Lodge | 1818 E. Alexander St. | Greeneville, MS 38703

Special Guest: Attorney Scott Colom

SCAN TO
PROTECT OUR VOICE

OUR VOICE. OUR POWER. OUR FUTURE.

MSBLACKCAUCUS.COM

2026 Agenda

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

MLBC Check-in | Harlow's Casino & Bar | 3-5 p.m.

Protect Our Voice Town Hall with Attorney Scott Colom | Elk's Lodge
1818 E. Alexander Street | 5:30 p.m.

Retreat Welcome Dinner for Members to follow

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17 | HARLOW'S EVENT CENTER

Breakfast | 8 a.m.

Opening Session | 8:30-9:45 a.m.
> Chairman Rep. Kabir Karriem, Presiding
> Greetings from the Honorable Mayor Errick D. Simmons, City of Greenville
> Greetings from the Honorable Supervisor Carl McGee, Washington County
> Opening Prayer | Sen. Gary Brumfield, MLBC Chaplain

Sponsors' Presentations | 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

MLBC Opening Luncheon Sponsored by One Voice | 12:15-1:45 p.m.
Keynote Presentation from Dr. Berneece Herbert, Chair and Associate Professor of Urban & Regional Planning at Jackson State University

Ethics Training | 2-4 p.m.
Led by House Democratic Caucus Leader Rep. Robert Johnson

Closing Remarks & Look Ahead | 4-4:30 p.m.

Mayor's Blues Reception | 6-10 p.m.
Downtown Greeville Waterfront

Mix & Mingle | The Maduro Lounge | 10 p.m.-Until
308 Washington Avenue | Greenville, MS



2026 Agenda

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

Grab & Go Breakfast in City of Greenville Council Chambers
City Hall | 340 Main Street

News Conference with Mayor Simmons | 9 a.m.

Transition to Washington County Convention Center
1040 S. Raceway Road | Greenville, MS

Mayor Simmons' Delta Dialogue with MLBC &
Commissioner Willie Simmons | 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

Lunch Sponsored by Entergy | 12:30-1:30 p.m.
> Focus on Performance-Based Funding with Dr. James Ford, Executive Director of the Center for Racial Equity in Education (CREED)

Afternoon Session | 2-6 p.m. | Facilitated by Alicia Netterville
> Focus on Redistricting
  > Words from MDOT Commissioner Willie Simmons, Central District
  > Messaging Overview from Kristal Swim, E Pluribus UNUM
  > Political Communications Training from Nina Smith, PoliSol
  > Special Session Scenario Planning

Fish Fry with Commissioner Simmons | 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

14th Annual Breakfast on the River Sponsored by Senate Democratic Caucus Leader Senator Derrick T. Simmons | 9 a.m.
Hotel 27 | 211 South Walton Street

Transition to Percy Memorial Library | 341 Main Street

Retreat Session | 10:30 a.m.-4 p.m. | Facilitated by Alicia Netterville
> 2026 Policy Agenda Review
> Closing Lunch Sponsored by Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative
  Keynote Presentation from Pam Shaw | 12 noon
> 2027 Legislative Session Prep
> Closing Remarks by Chairman Karriem
> Closing Prayer

Enjoy the 49th Mississippi Blues & Heritage Festival!



PUBLIC HEARING • ACTION NEEDED

MLBC ACTION ALERT

REDISTRICTING HEARING

HATTIESBURG

WHEN SEPTEMBER 17 | 6:00 PM

WHERE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
MANNONI PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

3057 HARDY STREET
HATTLESBURG, MS 39401

ARRIVE EARLY.
Sign in and secure your seat.

CLEAR BAG POLICY MAY BE ENFORCED.

WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN A PREP TRAINING?
Email mslbc1976@gmail.com

OUR COMMUNITIES. OUR MAPS. OUR FUTURE.

PUBLIC HEARING • ACTION NEEDED

MLBC ACTION ALERT

REDISTRICTING HEARING

BILOXI

WHEN SEPTEMBER 22 | 6:00 PM

WHERE MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST COMMUNITY COLLEGE
HOSPITALITY AND RESORT MANAGEMENT CENTER

420 DEBUTS ROAD
BILOXI, MS 39531

ARRIVE EARLY. WEAR BLACK.
Sign in and secure your seat.

CLEAR BAG POLICY MAY BE ENFORCED.

WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN A PREP TRAINING?
Email mslbc1976@gmail.com

OUR COMMUNITIES. OUR MAPS. OUR FUTURE.

PUBLIC HEARING • ACTION NEEDED

MLBC ACTION ALERT

REDISTRICTING HEARING

JACKSON

WHEN OCTOBER 1 | 6:00 PM

WHERE NEW CAPITOL

400 HIGH STREET
JACKSON, MS 39201

ARRIVE EARLY. WEAR BLACK.
Sign in and secure your seat.

CLEAR BAG POLICY MAY BE ENFORCED.

WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN A PREP TRAINING?
Email mslbc1976@gmail.com

OUR COMMUNITIES. OUR MAPS. OUR FUTURE.



ON DECK
MOSS POINT
RIPLEY
OXFORD

MLBC
MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS
EST. 1976

CONNECT WITH US

@MLBCOFFICIAL

@MSBLACKCAUCUS

@MLBCOFFICIAL

Advancing Equity, Justice, and Opportunity for African Americans in the Magnolia State

LEARN MORE AT WWW.MSBLACKCAUCUS.COM