

Statement from Leah Rupp Smith, spokeswoman for Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann:

“We understand how important projects are for communities, especially small and rural communities across Mississippi. We also believe it is important to track these projects to ensure they are being completed in a timely manner and in the way prescribed by legislation.

This summer, it was brought to our attention for the first time that some entities are not submitting quarterly reports as required by a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Finance and Administration. We also learned many municipalities, some of which may have received projects, have not submitted their annual audit to or been audited by the State Auditor as required by Mississippi Code Section 21-35-31. We are committed to increasing transparency and accountability related to all projects.

In terms of deadlines, the Lt. Governor has always been in favor of moving back deadlines to allow ample time for legislators to examine bills before they are moved for final passage, especially when they are appropriating significant taxpayer dollars.”

Statement from Speaker of the House Jason White:

"We have 122 members in the House of Representatives, each elected by more than 24,000 constituents, most of whom ran on improving the communities they represent. Throughout any given session, different members approach the Chairmen of Ways and Means and Appropriations with different projects they would like to have funded. Those projects are usually related to infrastructure and usually consist of a local project that local governments have been unable to fund and the lawmaker has identified as a need in the community after hearing from their constituents. Often times in this process, these projects include letters of support or a visit from local elected officials to express the gravity of the need.

Just in the 2024 Session, I believe we had over a billion dollars in the aggregate of requests from House members alone. In my 13 sessions we have almost always had a capital projects bill, either funded through a bond bill or cash surpluses. Under Republican leadership, the state has realized budget surpluses these last several years. With these surpluses, the legislature has been able to cut taxes, make historical investments in education and our teachers, and the capital projects list has grown, often with a heavy emphasis on infrastructure and economic development projects.

Once projects are funded through the passage of legislation, the funds are made available to Department of Finance and Administration (DFA), who then requires the entity/political subdivision to sign a memorandum of understanding that outlines certain guidelines and expectations for use of the funds. Once the memorandum of understanding is signed and returned to DFA, DFA transfers the funds to the local government or entity that is responsible for the project. The usage of those funds is overseen by DFA through a system of checks and balances. DFA requires quarterly reports of the progress throughout the process. In addition, local governments and authorities must comply with all state laws regarding procurement and bidding.

In my first Session as Speaker, we did strive to have a more open and transparent appropriations process as we moved through the session. I applaud our Chairmen for their shared commitment to increasing transparency in the process and I know the Representatives support our effort to provide more time and solicit member input as the legislature appropriates funds. We continually look for ways to provide greater transparency and accountability on spending of all taxpayer dollars."