

# RACIST POLICIES LEAD TO JACKSON WATER CRISIS

By Noah Amidon

opinions editor

The 165,000 Citizens of Jackson, Mississippi have been without drinkable tap water for the past month after a series of storms overwhelmed the city's largest water treatment plant, however, this is not a new occurrence. As many Mississippians would remember the city has dealt with a series of water issues in the past, with a winter storm in late 2021 bursting pipes and water mains across the capital city.

In a statement to the press following the winter breach, Mayor Chokwe Lumumba explained how these water problems will continue to occur until true repairs occur.

"Even when the pressure is restored, even when we're not under a boil-water notice," Lumumba said, "it's not a

matter of if these systems will fail, but when these systems will fail."

But, how did the city of Jackson get into such a precarious situation with their water? The answer stems all the way back to the 1980s when urban southern cities went through a period referred to as 'White Flight.' Specifically in Jackson, the city went through a full racial transformation.

"From 1980 to 1990, the proportion of Jackson's white population dropped from 52% to 43%. Then from 1990 to 2000, nearly 35,000 white residents left the city. Whites went from making up almost half of the city's population to a little more than a quarter," statistics from

individuals are not responsible for paying their water bill. It's supposed to be for the impoverished or needy, but there are no safeguards in place to make sure that's the case," Reeves said. "I reject this idea that the government can act like free money is floating around to pay for all these things. It has to get made up somehow. It's usually with higher taxes on you. Others seem to have forgotten that, but I'm very concerned about the 'free money' concept that has taken over politics today."

Governor Reeves does not believe that the state of Mississippi should be in a place of providing aid to the 165,000 residents of Jackson of which over 80% of individuals identify as Black or African-American. Yet, Governor Reeves has been the chieftain of misusing state funds in the recently unveiled welfare scandal involving Reeves, former welfare director John Davis, former NFL quarterback Brett Favre, three former WWE wrestlers and former Governor Phil Bryant; that misspent \$77 million worth of funds sourcing from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) federal block grant.

This is hypocrisy at its finest. Rather than supplying the people who are in need the most, our governor has decided to illegally direct funds towards wealthy (white) Mississippians. The city of Jackson will never fully recover when productive spending is being withheld, and illegal spending practices are depleting available funds.

Demonstrating just how out of touch Reeves is with the situation, on September 15 Reeves released a statement about the water crisis.

"Since the state of Mississippi stepped in to fix Jackson's water system, we've...restored water pressure to the city," Reeves said, "There will be a lot of hard conversations about next steps and the work that we need to do to create a sustainable water system."

Reeves had ample opportunities prior to this crisis breaking out to pass legislation that would've prevented this crisis from ever occurring. The 'hard conversations' Reeves referenced also should've already happened. However, it can often be ridiculous to assume that a politician of his caliber would ever swallow their pride and apologize for their lack of action. But, most importantly the crisis has not been solved. State health officials are still warning Jackson residents that their water is still not drinkable, despite the state retracting its aid efforts.

The final straw to Reeves' attack on the majority-Black city of Jackson, occurred on Friday, September 16, at a groundbreaking ceremony in Hattiesburg, Reeves said it was, "a great day not to be in Jackson."

The Jackson water crisis is not a problem that started in 2021, rather it is the cumulation of racist policies and actions that have all boiled over into a crisis that has put thousands of people's lives at risk.

the JFP demonstrate. "The city lost 19,485 white residents from 2000 to 2010, even as it added 7,976 Black residents."

With this loss of population came a loss of tax income, as despite mounting inflation the Jackson tax base has decreased by 20% since 1980. Additionally, the city of Jackson currently has a poverty rate of 24%, the 7th highest in the nation, which has forced this budgetary issue into a severe crisis. As can be seen in the 2021-22 total financial budget which was 5.2% lower than the preceding year's budget. This has created a backlog of funding for aging city facilities, which has greatly influenced the prominence of these crises.

However, in 2020 bipartisan legislation was passed by the Mississippi legislature that would provide aid to Jackson's financial crisis by assisting Jackson residents with paying their overdue water bills which would provide a stream of revenue to the city from the state government, that they could then use to provide relief to ailing infrastructure.

This would have provided a lifestream to the city of Jackson, however after passing through the Mississippi legislature a veto from Governor Tate Reeves quickly shut it down. In his address to the press following the veto, Reeves made very clear his reasonings for failing the relief bill.

"It allows politicians to say that



Oxford High School  
101 Charger Loop  
Oxford, MS 38655  
Phone: (662) 234-1562  
Fax: (662) 236-7941

Editor-in-Chief:  
Winnie Wilson  
Opinions Editor:  
Noah Amidon  
Features Editor:  
Caroline Berry  
News Editor:  
Henry Haley  
Entertainment Editors:  
Josi Johnson  
Andrews Mclellan  
Sports Editor:  
Aidan Patel  
Business Manager:  
Henry Haley  
Staff Writers:  
Javier Centallas  
Elliott Chaney  
Juneau Claassen  
Brody Denevan  
Swayze Dornbusch  
Addison Franks  
Mitchell Grandjean  
Jack Harper  
Makayla Jennings  
Ellie Jones  
John Scott Kendricks  
Niles Lovelady  
Anderson Shows

Adviser: Diala Chaney  
dhchaney@oxfordsd.org

The views and opinions expressed on this page are of an editorial nature and do not necessarily represent the views of The Charger staff, advisers, school faculty or administrators of Oxford High School or the Oxford School District.

The editorial board consists of Editor-in-Chief Winnie Wilson, News Editor/Business Manager Henry Haley, Features Editor Caroline Berry, Opinions Editor Noah Amidon, and Sports Editor Aidan Patel.

Readers are encouraged to submit letters to the editor and guest columns and articles. Such stories should be submitted to the journalism suite. Visit [www.oxfordsd.org](http://www.oxfordsd.org) for a complete editorial policy.

The Charger is distributed free of charge to all students and is available for subscription for \$30. 1000 copies of each issue are printed.

The Charger is currently a member of the following scholastic press associations: JEA, NSPA, SIPA, and MSPA.

**The Charger reserves the right to refuse to print any ad because of inappropriate content.**