

# Reaching for Prosperity: Creating Equitable Solutions for Mississippi's Working Families

**MEPC** ANNUAL  
POLICY  
CONFERENCE

Friday, October 22, 2010  
[www.mepconline.org](http://www.mepconline.org)



Mississippi  
Economic Policy  
Center  
A HOPE Initiative



October 22, 2010

Dear Conference Attendee,

Welcome to the 2010 Annual Policy Conference. Thank you for investing your time to engage in discussion about pressing issues that face Mississippi's working families.

Over the next couple of years, Mississippians will face several crucial questions that will affect the livelihood of every resident in this state. With job losses approaching 80,000 since the start of the recession and ARRA funding expiring how will we build a budget that positions the state to prosper in the future? How can we maximize the opportunity of health care reform? What steps can we take to protect Mississippians from high cost, irresponsible lending? What strategies exist to prepare the workforce for 21st century jobs that provide career pathways and good wages?

We begin the day with an overview of the economy and its effects on Mississippi, our towns and vulnerable populations. We then move into our panels where we are excited to have a mix of national and local experts dig into the questions raised above. The day concludes with our keynote speaker, education advocate, businessman and former Secretary of State, Dick Molpus.

The work of the Mississippi Economic Policy Center (MEPC) would not be possible without the support of its funders and partners. To our partners, we are grateful for the opportunity to work together. Your ongoing trust in and use of our work is one of the primary reasons that MEPC has grown to be the resource that it is today.

Finally, we urge you to stay engaged with us and with each other after the conference. If you are not receiving MEPC email updates, we encourage you to sign-up online as a way to stay informed throughout the year. We also hope that you will subscribe to our RSS feed to get immediate updates from our website and blog. And please let us know if the conference sparks new ideas for how we can work together to make Mississippi a more prosperous place to live for all her residents.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William J. Bynum".

**William J. Bynum**  
Chief Executive Officer  
ECD/HOPE



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed Sivak".

**Ed Sivak**  
Senior Vice President for Policy ECD/HOPE  
Director Mississippi Economic Policy Center

# About the Mississippi Economic Policy Center

The Mississippi Economic Policy Center is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that conducts independent research on public policy issues affecting working Mississippians. Through public outreach efforts, policy maker education and engaging the media, MEPC uses its analysis to ensure that the needs of low and moderate-income Mississippians, in particular, are considered in the development and implementation of public policy with the ultimate goal of improving access to economic opportunity.

MEPC is managed by the Enterprise Corporation of the Delta/Hope Community Credit Union (ECD/HOPE), a regional financial institution and community development intermediary dedicated to strengthening communities, building assets and improving lives in economically distressed areas throughout the Mid South.

The Mississippi Economic Policy Center currently has four areas of emphasis. The following descriptions provide a brief overview of each area:

## **Fiscal Policy –**

State budget decisions directly influence the quality of education that children receive, the condition of roads, and the safety of Mississippi's communities. MEPC efforts in this area promote strong fiscal systems to ensure that funds are available – in a good economic times and in bad economic times – to cover the costs of state services that Mississippians depend on everyday.

## **Responsible Lending –**

Predatory lending strips the assets and equity out of low-income communities and prevents families from moving up the economic ladder. MEPC analysis focuses on strategies to build wealth through homeownership and to protect the assets of low-income people who achieve that goal.

## **Income and Workforce Supports –**

While working hard, many of Mississippi's families fall short of economic security. According to an analysis of data from the U.S. Census 4 out of 10 Mississippi working families are low-income. MEPC examines ways to improve the economic opportunities for Mississippi's working families.

## **Community Economic Development –**

Since its inception, the Mississippi Economic Policy Center has worked closely with the program staff of ECD/HOPE to expand access to capital for small businesses, first time homebuyers and individuals - especially among populations and communities that have been historically underserved. MEPC supports the work of ECD/HOPE by conducting research and analysis on trends among small business lenders, affordable homeownership development and alternatives to high cost financial services. The analysis is used to advance public policies that promote asset development in Mississippi and across the region.

In addition to working with nonprofit organizations across the state, MEPC is a member of the State Fiscal Analysis Initiative managed by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and the Economic Analysis Research Network managed by the Economic Policy Institute. MEPC is also a member of the National Working Poor Families Project.

Funding for MEPC is provided by national and statewide foundations including the C.S. Mott Foundation (Mott), the Ford Foundation (Ford), the Insight Center for Community Economic Development (Insight), the Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative (MLICCI), the Open Society Institute (OSI), the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (Kellogg), and the Women's Fund of Mississippi. Additional support is provided collaboratively through the National Working Poor Families Project by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Ford, Mott and the Joyce Foundation.

# Reaching for Prosperity: Creating Equitable Solutions for Mississippi's Working Families

8:30 Registration & Refreshments  
9:00 Welcome

**Bill Bynum**, CEO  
Enterprise Corporation  
of the Delta

9:10 Introductions  
**Ed Sivak**, Director  
Mississippi Economic Policy  
Center

9:15 Opening Plenary  
(Windsor III)

*Working families across the country have been stretched economically by the recent recession. States like Mississippi with populations already struggling to make ends meet face a particularly challenging road to recovery. Jon Shure will open the conference with a national perspective on how states are faring in the current economic climate and Darrin Webb will provide an overview of the Mississippi economy. Marty Wiseman will address how the fiscal crisis is affecting local governments and Algernon Austin will provide an in depth look at how vulnerable populations are faring during the economic downturn.*

**Moderator:**  
**Ed Sivak**, Director  
Mississippi Economic Policy  
Center

**Presenters:**  
**Jon Shure**, Deputy Director  
The State Fiscal Project  
Center on Budget and Policy  
Priorities  
**Marty Wiseman**, Director  
John C. Stennis Institute of  
Government  
**Darrin Webb**  
State Economist, IHL  
**Algernon Austin**, Director  
Race, Ethnicity and the  
Economy Program,  
Economic Policy Institute

10:45 Break  
11:00 Breakout Sessions  
Conference attendees must choose one  
of the following sessions:

**SESSION A (Churchill I)**  
**After ARRA: Setting Priorities to Keep Mississippi's Recovery on Track**  
*In this breakout session we will discuss the current status of the state budget and some options for reform. It will include basic information about the state's budget and tax system as well as some discussion about the effect of the recession and federal stimulus funds on the state budget in recent years. Finally, we will discuss the outlook for the state budget and some revenue options to help the state maintain its investments in key areas like education and workforce development.*

**Moderator:**  
**Ed Sivak**  
Director  
Mississippi Economic Policy  
Center

**Presenters:**  
**Marianne Hill**  
Senior Policy Analyst  
Mississippi Institutions of  
Higher Learning  
**Sara Miller**, Senior Analyst  
Mississippi Economic Policy  
Center

**SESSION B (Churchill II)**  
**Health Care Reform in Mississippi**  
*In the session we will take a closer look at the intricacies of the new healthcare legislation with a specific focus on how this legislation will be implemented in Mississippi and how the lives of working Mississippians will be affected.*

**Moderator:**  
**Therese Hanna**  
Executive Director  
Center for Mississippi  
Health Policy

**Presenters:**  
**Wesley S. Prater**  
Mississippi Center for  
Health Policy  
**Corey Wiggins**  
Senior Consultant  
i-Think Group  
**Roy Mitchell**  
Director  
Mississippi Health Advocacy  
Program

**SESSION C (Winston)**  
**The High Cost of Being Poor: Lending Reform in Mississippi**  
*This session will focus on the cost disparities of various consumer products such as mortgage loans and financial services that affect low-wealth families in Mississippi. It will also examine the negative effects of payday lending and explore solutions to help Mississippi's working families build and maintain wealth.*

**Moderator:**  
**Antwyn Brown**  
Policy Analyst  
Mississippi Economic Policy  
Center

**Presenters:**  
**Jennifer Johnson**  
Senior Legislative Counsel  
Center for Responsible Lending  
**Paheadra Robinson**  
Director of Consumer  
Protection  
Mississippi Center For Justice

**SESSION D (Surrey)**  
**Moving Toward Self Sufficiency: Preparing Mississippi's Workforce**  
*This session will present data describing the thousands of Mississippians that stand to benefit from increased education and skills. It will also focus on key workforce training strategies such as Sector Initiatives and Career Pathways, and how they support individuals as they seek postsecondary credentials. Additionally, we will discuss how these strategies support regional economies and employers and highlight best practices from Mississippi and beyond.*

**Moderator:**  
**Sarah Welker**  
Policy Analyst  
Mississippi Economic Policy  
Center

**Presenters:**  
**Jack Mills**, Director  
National Network of Sector  
Partners  
Insight Center for Community  
Economic Development  
**LaNell Kellum**  
Director of Career and  
Technical Education  
State Board for Community  
& Junior Colleges

12:30 **Keynote Luncheon**  
**Dick Molpus**, President  
The Molpus Woodlands  
Group, LLC

1:30 **Closing Remarks**

## Conference Presenters:



**Algernon Austin,**  
*Director of the Race, Ethnicity,  
and the Economy Program  
Economic Policy Institute*

Algernon Austin is a sociologist of racial relations with a specialization on black Americans. Prior to joining the Economic Policy Institute, he was assistant director of research at the Foundation Center and a

Senior Fellow at the Demos think tank. From 2001 to 2005, he served on the faculty of Wesleyan University.

Austin is the author of *Getting It Wrong: How Black Public Intellectuals Are Failing Black America* and *Achieving Blackness: Race, Black Nationalism, and Afrocentrism in the Twentieth Century*. He has published scholarly articles in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *Qualitative Sociology*, the *Journal of African American Studies*, and *Race, Gender and Class*.



**Antwyn Brown,**  
*Policy Analyst  
Mississippi Economic  
Policy Center*

Antwyn Brown is a policy analyst with the Mississippi Economic Policy Center (MEPC). At MEPC, Mr. Brown's focus is directed towards analyzing and communi-

cating the implications of payday lending and state budget decisions on working families. He is also examining the cost disparities experienced by low income Mississippians for selected consumer products. Mr. Brown worked for several years as an Evaluator with the Mississippi Legislative Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review, where he worked extensively on state health policy issues such as quality of inmate care within state correctional facilities and access to medical care at state colleges and universities.

Mr. Brown has a Master of Public Policy and Administration degree from Mississippi State University and a Bachelor's Degree in English and Journalism from Tougaloo College. Mr. Brown is an adjunct professor and a certified paralegal. Mr. Brown volunteers his time with Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Jackson, Central Mississippi Down Syndrome Society, Jackson Public School System and Habitat for Humanity.



**William J. Bynum,**  
*Chief Executive Officer  
ECD/HOPE*

Bill Bynum is Chief Executive Officer of ECD/HOPE (Enterprise Corporation of the Delta/Hope Community Credit Union), a community development financial institution, intermediary and policy center that addresses development needs confronting low-wealth people and communities in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee. Since 1994 ECD/HOPE financing and related assistance for entrepreneurs, homebuyers and community development projects in the Delta, areas affected by Hurricane Katrina and other distressed Mid South communities has benefited more than 75,000 individuals.

A Henry Crown Fellow of the Aspen Institute, Bynum is recipient of the University of North Carolina Distinguished Alumnus Award, Ernst & Young/Kauffman Foundation National Entrepreneur of the Year Award, National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions Annie Vamper Award, and National Rural Assembly Rural Hero Award. He serves as a trustee/director of the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, Foundation for the Mid South, Jackson State University Foundation, Regions Bank Community Development Corporation, William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation, Mississippi Children's Museum, Mississippi Access to Justice Commission and is a Presidential appointee to the Community Development Advisory Board, which he currently chairs. Prior to joining ECD/HOPE, Bill helped establish Self-Help, a pioneer in the development banking industry, and directed programs at the North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center.



## **Therese L. Hanna**

*Executive Director  
Center for Mississippi  
Health Policy*

Ms. Hanna is currently Executive Director of the Center for Mississippi Health Policy. Prior to this position, she served as State Insurance Administrator for eleven years, where she was responsible for managing

the State and School Employees' Life and Health Insurance Plan, the State Agencies' Workers' Compensation Trust, and the insurance component of Mississippi's State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). During this time she was named by The Mississippi Business Journal as one of Mississippi's Leading Business Women. Previous experience includes seventeen years with the Mississippi State Department of Health where she served as a health planner and analyst and as Director of Policy and Planning. Ms. Hanna is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Rhodes College with a Bachelor's degree in biology and psychology and holds a Master of Health Sciences degree in health care administration from Mississippi College.

The Center for Mississippi Health Policy is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit organization that provides objective information to inform health policy decisions. The Center's work involves communicating research, examining health status and health care delivery trends, and analyzing relevant health policy issues affecting Mississippi. Examples of the Center's projects include an economic analysis of the University of Mississippi Medical Center, research on state initiatives to address childhood obesity, an analysis of the state's trauma care system, a review of issues associated with the reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), a study of options available to Mississippi in establishing a statewide health data system, a detailed examination of children's health coverage in the state, an assessment of Mississippi's System of Care for children with serious emotional disorders, a review of all-terrain vehicle safety policy issues, and an analysis of the influence of the federal Farm Bill on nutrition and health. The Center is also directing a five-year grant project funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Bower Foundation, in collaboration with three Mississippi universities, to evaluate the impact of the Mississippi Healthy Students Act.



## **Marianne T. Hill**

*Senior Economist  
Center for Policy Research  
and Planning  
Mississippi Institutions of  
Higher Learning*

Marianne Hill, Senior Economist with the Center for Policy Research and Planning of the Institutions of Higher Learning, has been editor of the Mississippi Economic Review and Outlook since 1990. She does the state econometric forecast, researches issues of interest to the state, and contributes regularly to professional economics journals and books, as well as to local newspapers and radio talk shows. Recent publications include "Wage Gaps in Mississippi" (Mississippi Encyclopedia, 2009); and "Unemployment Insurance: A Broken System" and "State Budget Blues" (both in The Economic Crisis Reader, 2009). Her article on "Development as Empowerment" (2003) has been reprinted in three books. She currently serves as Chair of the Mississippi Commission on the Status of Women, which she was instrumental in establishing. Dr. Hill received her Ph.D. in economics from Yale University (1983).



## **Jennifer Roxann Johnson**

*Senior Legislative Counsel  
Center for Responsible Lending*

Jennifer began her legal career 15 years ago specializing in prosecuting crimes against children and crimes committed by child offenders. She prosecuted high profile cases gaining national and international interest. Her cases have been featured on CourtTV, CNN International, The New York Times, and People magazine. She ultimately served as Managing Assistant Solicitor for Charleston and Berkeley Counties prosecuting all manner of violent crimes.

After practicing law for 15 years, Jennifer recently joined the Center for Responsible Lending (CRL) as legislative counsel. She has taken on the task of educating community leaders on financial consumer protection issues and providing technical assistance for legislative campaigns in various states.

The Center for Responsible Lending is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research and policy organization dedicated to protecting homeownership and family wealth by working to eliminate abusive financial practices. CRL has conducted or commissioned landmark studies on predatory lending practices and the impact of state and federal laws that protect borrowers. CRL supports state efforts to combat predatory lending and works for regulatory changes to require responsible practices among lenders nationwide. CRL is affiliated with Self-Help Credit Union, one of the nation's largest community development financial institutions.

## Conference Presenters:



### **LaNell Kellum**

*Director of Career and  
Technical Education  
State Board for Community  
& Junior Colleges*

LaNell Kellum joined the staff of the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges in 2010 as the Director for Postsecondary Career and

Technical Education. Kellum has twenty-four years of professional work experience in educational administration, teaching, and grant development in Mississippi and Oklahoma. A goal-oriented individual with strong leadership capabilities, LaNell has extensive experience in coordinating and facilitating professional development and training programs, conducting research, defining and managing complex projects, and acquiring grant funding for special initiatives.

As an administrator for Rogers State College in Oklahoma, she managed federal education, human services, and workforce development grants serving disadvantaged adults throughout Eastern Oklahoma ranging from \$250,000 to \$4.5 million. While serving as a research specialist for the Mississippi State University Research and Curriculum Unit, she developed state curriculum frameworks, designed and conducted professional development for teachers and administrators, and chaired state work teams to acquire \$22 million in federal education and workforce development funds for the Mississippi Department of Education. As grant specialist for the Columbus School District, LaNell acquired and managed \$4.5 million in reading and technology state grants; directed McKellar Technology Center, the recipient of the Mississippi Tech Prep Exemplary Site Award for 2004; and served as principal of Columbus High School. Currently she serves as the Director for Postsecondary Career and Technical Education for the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges and offers broad expertise in curriculum development, career and technical education program development, management, and evaluation.



### **Sara Miller**

*Senior Policy Analyst  
Mississippi Economic  
Policy Center*

Sara Miller is Senior Policy Analyst for the Mississippi Economic Policy Center. As a senior policy analyst, Miller primarily focuses her work on Mississippi

tax and budget issues. Before working at the Mississippi Economic Policy Center, she served for three years as an Evaluator for the Mississippi Legislature's Joint Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER). She went to Louisiana State University for her undergraduate degree and was awarded a Master of Public Administration degree from George Washington University.

Before and during graduate school, she worked at a nonprofit HIV/AIDS organization in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and at the Health Resources and Services Administration of the US Department of Health and Human Services in Washington, D.C.



### **Jack Mills**

*Jack Mills  
Director, National Network of Sector  
Partners  
Insight Center for Community  
Economic Development*

Jack Mills leads the National Network of Sector Partners, an initiative of the Insight Center for Community Economic Development. He guides NNSP's

efforts to improve employment for low-income individuals and other workers, and benefit the industries in which they work, through the use of sector initiatives. He joined the Insight Center in 2005. Jack is nationally recognized in the field of workforce development, with over 20 years of experience.

He has authored or co-authored publications including *Building Skills, Increasing Economic Vitality: A Handbook for State Policy Makers*; *Filling America's Jobs: How Businesses Can Implement Sector Workforce Development Strategies for Jobs and Economic Growth*; *Opportunity in Tough Times: Promoting Advancement for Low-Wage Workers*; *The Industry Sector Approach to Growing the Baton Rouge Economy*; and *Sector Initiatives for Colorado's Long-Term Care Industry*.

Prior to joining the Insight Center, Jack held senior positions in consulting, nonprofit organizations, and government.



## Roy Mitchell

*Executive Director  
Mississippi Health Advocacy  
Program*

Roy Mitchell is the executive director of the Mississippi Health Advocacy Program. MHAP combines research, analysis and grass-roots organizing to improve health policies, practices and funding

in Mississippi, especially in support of the state's poor and underserved people. Roy's work with public interest advocacy goes back 22 years. In both urban and rural settings, Roy has staffed and supervised legal clinics for domestic violence victims, low-income housing tenants, seniors, and Medicaid and welfare recipients. Over the years he has served as the consumer's representative on numerous Medicaid, Human Services and Health Department committees and task forces. He has organized several statewide coalitions and initiatives and promoted the successful passage of health and welfare legislation. Roy spearheaded the Mississippi cigarette tax initiative, successfully leading a coalition described by a leading national health policy firm as the state's largest and most diverse health policy coalition to date. Moreover, as a training fellow for the Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest (CLPI), Roy works to promote, support and protect 501(c)(3) nonprofit advocacy and lobbying by training nonprofits on legal compliance and practical skills of nonprofit lobbying.

Roy's formal education includes a law degree from the New College of California School of Law, the nation's oldest public interest law school and a bachelor's degree in public administration from the University of Mississippi. After graduating from law school, Roy staffed and supervised legal clinics for low-income populations in northern and southern California. His previous employers include the Legal Aid Foundation of Santa Barbara County and the San Francisco Neighborhood Legal Assistance Foundation.



## Dick Molpus

*President, The Molpus Company,  
Molpus Woodlands Group, LLC,  
Molpus Timberlands Management*

A Philadelphia, Mississippi, native and a 1971 business administration graduate of the University of Mississippi, Molpus served as Mississippi Governor William Winter's first appointee, Molpus was selected as Executive Director

of the Governor's Office of Federal-State Programs, an agency in disarray from the previous administration.

He was among several younger staff members known as the "Boys of Spring" who helped guide Governor Winter's historic Education Reform Act of 1982 to passage. In 1983, Molpus was elected secretary of state of Mississippi. During his tenure Molpus converted the secretary of state's office from an agency that was a tax drain of \$200,000 into one garnering a profit of over \$2 million per year.

Dick Molpus and his wife, Sally, were the founders of Parents for Public Schools, which now has chapters in twenty-five cities in fifteen states across the country. That organization steadfastly supports local public schools and works with parents to ensure high standards for those schools.

In 2005 Molpus was inducted into the Mississippi Business Hall of Fame, and in 2008 he was honored as a Champion of Justice by the Mississippi Center of Justice. He currently is a member of the Board of Directors of the Wilson Research Foundation, the fund-raising arm of the Methodist Rehabilitation Center in Jackson, Mississippi.



## Wesley S. Prater

*Mississippi Center for  
Health Policy*

Wesley S. Prater is a resident of Madison, MS. He received his Bachelor of Science Degree in Chemistry from Jackson State University and his Master of Public Health Degree from Yale University.

Wesley works as a Health Policy Analyst with the Center for Mississippi Health Policy in Jackson, MS. He has been with the Center four years and his job duties include: policy analysis, dissemination of information, and analysis of legislation and regulations. Some of his areas of focus include: health insurance, childhood obesity, school nurses, food and nutrition service programs, and mental health issues.

The mission of the Center for Health Policy is to serve as a catalyst for health policy debate, providing information to policymakers and the general public and communicating research findings that will stimulate dialogue and inform decision-making.

## Conference Presenters:



### **Paheadra Bratton Robinson, Esquire**

*Director of Consumer Protection  
Mississippi Center For Justice*

A native of Jackson, Mississippi, Paheadra attended Jackson Public Schools, is a graduate of Tougaloo College and the University of Mississippi School of Law. Paheadra began her

legal career in private practice and worked as a legislative counsel for the Mississippi House of Representatives. She joined the Mississippi Center for Justice in August 2006, and leads the Center's economic justice work which focuses on foreclosure prevention and predatory lending. Paheadra's interest in social justice and welfare led her to co-found Fresh Start Foundation, a non-profit organization created to provide direct financial aid to victims of Hurricane Katrina.

Paheadra's professional associations include the Mississippi Bar Association, Magnolia Bar Association, Mississippi Women's Lawyer's Association, Parents for Public Schools and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. Paheadra is married to attorney Michael Robinson and they live in Jackson with their three young children: Kameron, Kristopher and Khloe.



### **Jon Shure**

*Deputy Director of the  
State Fiscal Project  
Center on Budget and  
Policy Priorities*

Jon Shure is Deputy Director of the State Fiscal Project. He came to the Center in 2009 after 12 years as president of New Jersey Policy Perspective, a state research organization he founded in 1997.

Under his direction, NJPP became a major voice on tax and budget policy in New Jersey. Shure began his career as a reporter for The Record newspaper of Bergen County, NJ, where his assignments included the paper's State House and Washington bureaus. After leaving The Record, Shure served on the staff of the US House of Representatives Subcommittee on Commerce, Competitiveness, and Consumer Protection. He was Communications Director for New Jersey Governor Jim Florio from 1990-1993.

Before establishing New Jersey Policy Perspective, Shure was a vice president at the Twentieth Century Fund (now The Century Foundation) in New York, a nonprofit engaged in research on national policy issues. He is a Visiting Associate at the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University, and previously taught two courses in the Political Science Department at Rutgers in New Brunswick: New Jersey Politics and Mass Media and US Democracy.



### **Ed Sivak**

*Director  
Mississippi Economic Policy Center*

Ed Sivak is the founding director of the Mississippi Economic Policy Center. As director, Sivak coordinates MEPC's policy efforts to advance public policy issues that improve the quality of life for low-income and low-wealth Mississippians. Prior to the found-

ing of MEPC in 2006, Sivak worked for five years with the Enterprise Corporation of the Delta developing its impact monitoring systems and coordinating the Emerging Markets Partnership, an ECD led effort to stimulate economic development in the Delta through strategies that promoted entrepreneurship, homeownership and access to health care. Sivak's experience before coming to ECD includes work as a graduate fellow at Georgetown University's Center for Public and Nonprofit Leadership (formerly the Center for the Study of Voluntary Organizations and Service).

He also coordinated programs at L'Arche Irenicon, a nonprofit organization that provides homes to adults with developmental disabilities. Sivak holds a Master of Public Policy from the Georgetown Public Policy Institute and a Bachelor of Arts in History and English from Marquette University. He is a former member of the Federal Reserve Board's Consumer Advisory Council where he chaired the Community Affairs and Housing Subcommittee. He is currently the secretary of the BancorpSouth Mid Mississippi Region Community Reinvestment Advisory Council and a board member of the Mississippi Low Income Child Care Initiative.



## Darrin Webb

*State Economist*

Dr. Darrin Webb serves as the State Economist for Mississippi. In this position, he provides updates on the economy to the legislature and to communities in the state. He serves as a member of the group that makes tax revenue estimates for the

state and assesses economic and revenue impacts from changes in the state's tax structure.

Prior to coming to IHL he was assistant professor at the University of Louisiana at Monroe. He is a native Mississippian and received his Ph.D. from Clemson University and his MS and BS degrees from Mississippi State University and an associate's degree from Hinds Community College.

He is married to the former Angie Bouchillon of Louisville, Mississippi. They have three children (Sarah 16, Jimmie 13 and Thad 9) and reside in Pelahatchie, Mississippi



## Sarah Welker

*Policy Analyst*

*Mississippi Economic Policy Center*

Sarah Welker is a Policy Analyst with the Mississippi Economic Policy Center. Welker focuses her efforts within MEPC's Income and Working Families issue area. Accordingly, she researches and monitors policies that impact

Mississippi's low-income and working families; conducts outreach and training on issues related to self-sufficiency and economic stability of families; and researches best practices for adult education, postsecondary persistence, and workforce training. Before coming to the Center, Welker served as the Data Analyst for KIPP Delta Public Schools in Helena, AR.

She holds a B.A. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where she graduated summa cum laude with degrees in both Economics and Public Policy Analysis. During her time at UNC, she worked with the Hunger Pilot Research Project examining the provision of emergency food assistance through North Carolina's food banks. Welker also worked with the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation in Winston-Salem, North Carolina where she focused on issues related to the state's prisoner reentry infrastructure.



## Corey Wiggins

*Senior Consultant*

*i-Think Group*

Corey Wiggins, a Mississippi native, received his Bachelor's degree from Alcorn State University. In addition, he received a Master of Science in Public Health with an emphasis in Health Policy from the

University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Currently, Corey is a doctoral candidate at UAB where he is conducting research on the association between neighborhood characteristics and hypertension. In addition to a diverse academic background, Mr. Wiggins's professional experiences include serving as a health policy fellow in the United States Senate, managing a national stroke study and working as an analyst for the Mississippi Legislature. Currently, Mr. Wiggins serves as a Senior Consultant with the i-Think Group where he focuses on strategic management, program planning, administration and evaluation, and health policy.









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