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Mississippi 2nd in Nation in Increased Exports, 1,800 Affordable Housing Units Approved, Mississippi Blues Trail Goes National, *Changzhou Meets Mississippi: Trade and Investment Opportunities Forum*, Workshop on Gulf Coast Economic Recovery

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Mississippi Ranks 2nd in Nation in Increased Exports for January and February 2009; Achieves Record in 2008

In January and February 2009, Mississippi exports were up 12 percent from the same time period in 2008, ranking the state 2nd in the U.S. in increased exports this year. In 2008, Mississippi exported more than \$7 billion worth of manufactured goods to international customers. This year, only four states and one territory showed increases with all other states experiencing decreases in exports for the same January - February time period. According to U.S. Department of Commerce estimates, these export numbers translate into approximately 108,500 jobs for Mississippians.

Mississippi's primary export sectors in 2008 included: Mineral fuel/oil (lubricants and crude oil), electrical and non-electrical machinery, tanning/dye/paint/putty (paint pigment and metal), cotton/yarn/fabric, vehicles (not railway), wood pulp, plastic, meat (poultry), paper/paperboard, furniture and bedding. Mississippi's primary export markets in 2008 included: Canada (\$1.3 billion), Mexico (\$1.1 billion), China (\$380 million), Panama (\$283 million), Gibraltar (\$252 million), Belgium (\$250 million), India (\$232 million), United Arab Emirates (\$232 million), Brazil (\$230 million) and the United Kingdom (\$218 million).

Mississippi companies are encouraged to take advantage of MDA's export marketing services and programs designed to assist them in maintaining their existing international markets. MDA's international trade specialists can also help businesses expand into new markets and learn how to promote new or different products to international customers.

For more information regarding MDA's international marketing services and events, or to request a consultation with an international trade specialist, please visit

www.mississippi.gov

Governor Barbour Announces Approximately 1,800 Affordable Housing Units Approved through Small Rental Assistance Program

Governor Haley Barbour has announced that the first two rounds of the State's Small Rental Assistance Program (SRAP) are well under way with approximately 1,800 affordable housing units approved to date. SRAP encourages people to rehabilitate or construct small rental units along the Coast. The program received federal approval and began disbursements in 2008. SRAP provides up to \$40,000 per unit in forgivable loans if the owners of small rental properties rent for five years to low- and moderate-income tenants. According to Governor Barbour, SRAP empowers Mississippians to help other Mississippians recover from Hurricane Katrina.

SRAP is one of 17 recovery initiatives administered by MDA and funded by the federal disaster recovery funds the state received. Approximately \$3 billion of these funds is dedicated to rebuilding housing stock along the Coast; this includes \$2 billion which has already been disbursed to more than 28,000 homeowners through the Homeowner Assistance Program and almost \$1 billion in affordable housing construction initiatives. In addition to SRAP, disaster recovery housing programs include a Long Term Workforce Housing Program, which has already awarded \$224 million to 36 projects representing almost 6,000 units, and a Public Housing Program. Roughly 1,000 of about 2,500 projected public housing units are either finished, under construction or approved for construction.

Changzhou Meets Mississippi: Trade and Investment Opportunities Forum to be held in Jackson May 21

MDA, the U.S. - China Chamber of Commerce and the Changzhou Municipal Government will host *Changzhou Meets Mississippi: Trade and Investment Opportunities Forum* on Thursday, May 21, at the Jackson Convention Complex in downtown Jackson. The forum will bring together Mississippi business representatives and executives and political leaders from Changzhou, China to explore investment and trade opportunities in Mississippi and China.

Company representatives from Severstal, PSL North America and PACCAR will also be on hand to share beneficial information regarding foreign investment in Mississippi. Severstal CEO Jim Hrusovsky, PSL North America representative Brian Vail and Lex Lemmers with PACCAR will be speaking during a session titled *Case Studies of Successful Foreign Investment in Mississippi*.

Mississippi businesses interested in learning more about doing business in China are encouraged to attend this event. Chinese firms that will be in attendance represent billions of dollars in potential investment opportunities, and MDA urges its partners to share the forum information with their local businesses.

For more information or to register for the event, please call (601) 359-3155, or e-mail sbanyard@mississippi.org.

MDA, IEDC to Host Free Workshop on Gulf Coast Economic Recovery

The International Economic Development Council (IEDC), in partnership with MDA, the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration and the Louisiana Department of Economic Development, will hold a free workshop June 10th from 7:15 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Hilton New Orleans Riverside, Two Poydras Street, New Orleans. "Building Resilient Economies: A Free Market on a Assisting

Funding and Resources for Gulf Coast Economic Recovery" will provide local communities and economic development organizations with critical information on how to access funds for long-term recovery.

The workshop is free for attendees from Mississippi and Louisiana, and it is geared toward public- and private-sector representatives in the field of economic development. To view a full conference agenda and to register online, please click [here](#).

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