



MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR
PUBLIC POLICY

Mississippi

FAT CAT REPORT 2023

Top Public Sector Pay in the Magnolia State



Key Findings

- **The Fat Cats are getting fatter.** Mississippi's 50 highest paid public officials now cost taxpayers a combined total of over \$10 million a year, up from \$9.6 million the previous year.
- **The 50 highest-paid public officials in Mississippi earn over \$200,000 a year on average.** Despite being one of the poorest states in America, Mississippi continues to have some of the highest-paid public officials in the nation. As an example, our State Superintendent for Public Education receives over \$300,000 a year, while two local superintendents are each paid around a quarter of a million dollars per year.
- **Dozens of public officials make more than Mississippi's Governor.** Even after receiving a scheduled pay raise next year, the Governor will still not rank among the top 50 highest-paid officials in the state.
- **Fat Cat pay has risen faster than average salaries.** In the past year, the average salary of the top highest-paid public officials rose 5%, from an average of \$193,678 to over \$205,000. Median Mississippi pay has barely changed.
- **School superintendent pay has soared.** Twenty of the 50 top paid public officials were school superintendents. The average salary of school superintendents rose an average of 14% to more than \$200,000 a year.
- **High pay does not mean good public services.** Some of the highest-paid education officials on the list preside over some of the worst education outcomes.

Why the Fat Cat Report?

Taxpayers have the right to know how their tax dollars are spent. This, the third annual Mississippi Fat Cat Report, ranks the highest-paid public officials in our state and compares their salaries to the average pay of a teacher, nurse, and State Trooper, as well as that of the average Mississippian. The report also looks at how the salaries of the highest-paid officials have increased compared to previous years.

The aim of this report is not to criticize every highly paid public official. Some public officials are paid to do demanding jobs that require specialized skills and serve the public well. Other roles might require someone with a set of skills who would be able to command a far higher salary in the private sector. However, this is not always the case.

This report aims to trigger a debate about what we pay public officials. Such a debate is desperately needed. Mississippi's state government is currently running a massive budget surplus. Our state coffers are full, and our financial reserves are greater than at any point in history. Who will benefit from this financial glut: ordinary Mississippi families or public sector Fat Cats?

We aim to show ordinary Mississippians that our state has a bloated bureaucracy, and that this situation often means that Mississippians receive mediocre public services.

Methodology

We used several sources to compile this list of state, school district, and local government salaries. For state officials, we used the data provided to us in response to a public records request.

Here are links to the spreadsheets from the various sources used:

- [School superintendent pay](#);
- [US governor pay](#);
- [Local government salary survey](#);
- [School superintendent rankings](#).

We have intentionally excluded the salaries of those in the higher education/university sector. Had they not been excluded, we would have had to include the salaries of top athletic coaches. How universities attract and pay for sporting talent is, we believe, a different issue.

Nor does this report include the incomes of chancery clerks, some of whom earn well over \$200,000 a year. Chancery clerks are paid in part from fees they generate, rather than receiving a straightforward allocation from the public purse.

To place Fat Cat salaries into context, we compared them to the starting salaries of teachers (\$53,699),¹ registered nurses (\$54,284),² and State Troopers (\$57,680),³ as well as the median Mississippi income (\$45,180).⁴

Findings

- **The top 50 highest-paid public officials cost taxpayers over \$10 million a year:** The combined annual cost of the top 50 salaries in Mississippi increased from \$9.6 million to \$10.3 million since last year.
- **Top public sector salaries are rising faster than average salaries overall:** In the past year, the average salary of the top highest-paid public officials in our state rose 5%, from an average of \$193,678 to \$205,489. Meanwhile, the median salary for the average Mississippian remained somewhat stable at \$45,180.
- **Mississippi's Governor does not make the list:** Mississippi's governor currently earns \$122,160, which is expected to rise to \$160,000 in 2024. However, the lowest paid position on the Fat Cat list earns \$171,237.
- **Mississippi's 50 Fat Cats are paid more than America's 50 state governors:** While the 50 Mississippi Fat Cats receive a combined total of \$10.3 million a year, the combined salary of America's 50 state governors is a mere \$7.4 million.⁵

The Jackson Public Schools Superintendent, who oversees a district with approximately 20,000 students, makes more than the Governor of Florida, the latter of which has a population of more than 21 million.⁶ The Humphreys County Superintendent, while heading a district with a D rating, makes more than the Governor of Texas.

¹ Average pay data determined from Mississippi Personnel Board through a FOI request (<https://mspolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/SalaryStatistics.pdf>)

² Average pay data determined from Mississippi Personnel Board through a FOI request (<https://mspolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/SalaryStatistics.pdf>)

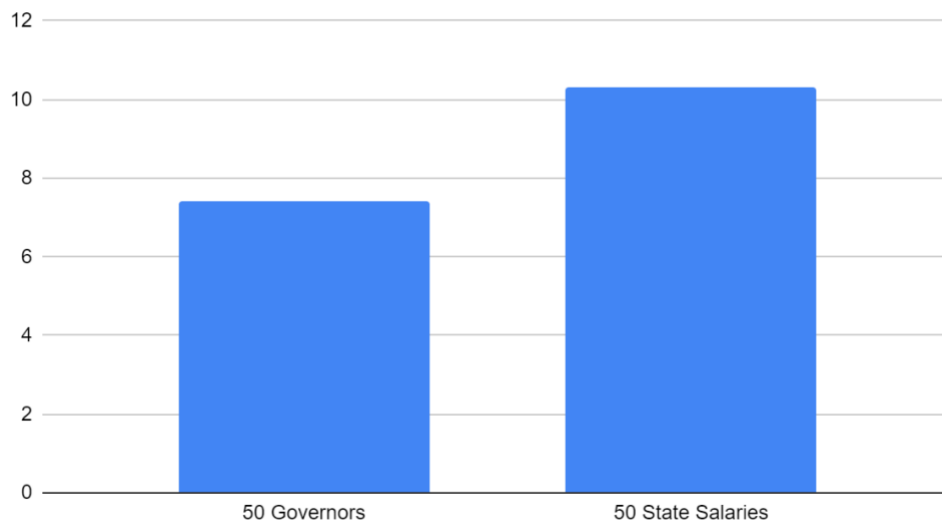
³ Average pay data determined from Mississippi Personnel Board through a FOI request (<https://mspolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/SalaryStatistics.pdf>)

⁴ Wong, J. D. (2023, July 17). Average salary by state in 2023. Forbes Advisor. <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/average-salary-by-state/>

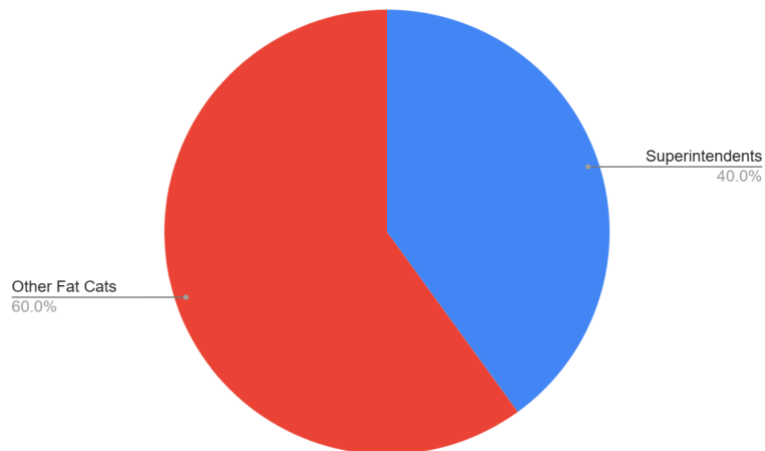
⁵ Gathered from Salaries from the Council of State Governments ([State Executive Salaries: Regional and State-level Comparisons - The Council of State Governments \(csg.org\)](https://www.csg.org/publications/state-executive-salaries))

⁶ Pay data determined from public salary records given by the MDE (<https://mspolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/MS-Center-for-Public-Policy-Superintendent-2022-2023.xlsx-Sheet-1.pdf>).

Salary Comparison 2023(in millions)



- **Fat Cats vs. ordinary workers:** The \$10.3 million salary bill for the 50 highest-paid public officials in our state would be enough to pay the salaries of the following numbers of workers:
 - 189 nurses (at \$54,284 per year)
 - 178 State Troopers (at \$57,680 per year)
 - 191 teachers (at \$53,699 per year)
 - 227 Mississippians receiving the median income (\$45,180 per year)
- **School superintendents dominate the list:** A total of 40% of those on the list are school superintendents, which is slightly down from last year. Those school superintendents who are no longer on the list include those from Claiborne, Pearl, Pascagoula, Columbus, Scott County, Meridian, and Gulfport. Joining the list are the superintendents of Oxford and the New Albany District.



- **Bumper pay rises for school superintendents:** Those school superintendents on the list received on average a bumper increase of 14%, which took them over \$200,000 a year.
- **Best value for money school superintendents:** School superintendents that provide the best value for money, calculated as their cost to the taxpayer relative to the number of grade point achieved (see appendix B), include:
 - Desoto school superintendent (A rated)
 - Rankin county school superintendent (A rated)
 - Harrison county school superintendent (A rated)
 - Madison county school superintendent (A rated)
 - Lamar country school superintendent (A rated)
- **Worst value for money school superintendents:** School superintendents that provide the worst value for money, calculated as their cost to the taxpayer relative to the number of grade point achieved (see appendix B), include:
 - Humphrey county school superintendent (F rated)
 - Hollandale school superintendent (D rated)
 - Amite school superintendent (F rated)
 - West Tallahatchie superintendent (D rated)
 - Wilkinson country superintendent (F rated)
- **Fat Cat pay does not necessarily reflect Fat Cat performance:** Some of the highest-paid public officials preside over some of the worst public service systems in the state, if not the country.

For example, the school superintendent for the F-rated Humphreys County District receives \$183,500, despite having a mere 1,257 students. Itawamba's school district supervisor, meanwhile, has more than twice that number of students (3,391) and presides over an A-rated district, but receives only \$124,455.

- **Fat Cats are (largely) unelected:** Only one of the top paid public officials is directly democratically accountable, and this is the Mississippi Supreme Court Justice. The average school superintendents on our list make more than the Chief Justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court.
- **Local accountability seems to restrain pay:** None of the top 50 highest-paid public officials in our state are local city government employees, suggesting that local accountability helps keep public sector excesses to a minimum.

Table A: Top 50 Mississippi Public Sector Employees, 2023

| Rank | Title | Salary | Increase since 2022 | Employer | # Teachers | # Nurses | # State Troopers | # Average Mississippian |
|------|---|--------------|---------------------|-----------------|------------|----------|------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | STATE SUPER OF PUBLIC EDUCATION | \$307,125 | 2.38% | State | 5.7 | 5.6 | 5.3 | 6.8 |
| 2 | DPS - DEPUTY CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER | \$300,000 | 3.80% | State | 5.6 | 5.5 | 5.2 | 6.6 |
| 3 | PHYSICIAN SUPERVISOR | \$298,396 | 0% | State | 5.6 | 5.5 | 5.2 | 6.6 |
| 4 | PSYCHIATRY TEAM LEAD | \$298,396 | 0% | State | 5.6 | 5.5 | 5.2 | 6.6 |
| 5 | STATE MEDICAL EXAMINER | \$298,396.21 | 2.89% | State | 5.6 | 5.5 | 5.2 | 6.6 |
| 6 | CORINTH SCHOOL Dist Superintendent | \$250,780 | 18.97% | School District | 5.6 | 4.6 | 4.3 | 5.5 |
| 7 | ASSOCIATE STATE MEDICAL EXAMINER | \$248,663 | 10.51% | State | 5.6 | 4.6 | 4.3 | 5.5 |
| 8 | PHYSICIAN II | \$248,663 | 0% | State | 5.6 | 4.6 | 4.3 | 5.5 |
| 9 | TUPELO PUBLIC SCHOOL Dist Superintendent | \$245,700 | 5% | School District | 5.6 | 4.6 | 4.3 | 5.5 |
| 10 | JACKSON PUBLIC SCHOOL Dist Superintendent | \$243,000 | 8% | School District | 5.6 | 4.6 | 4.3 | 5.5 |
| 11 | HINDS CO SCHOOL Dist Superintendent | \$225,869 | 10% | School District | 4.2 | 4.1 | 3.9 | 4.9 |
| 12 | GRENADA SCHOOL Dist Superintendent | \$218,106 | 6% | School District | 4.1 | 4.0 | 3.8 | 4.8 |
| 13 | DESOTO CO SCHOOL Dist Superintendent | \$217,227 | 3% | School District | 4.0 | 3.9 | 3.8 | 4.8 |
| 14 | PHARMACY SUPERVISOR | \$207,219 | 0% | State | 3.9 | 3.8 | 3.6 | 4.6 |

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|----|---|-----------|--------|--------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 15 | EXEC DIR- INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SVC | \$204,701 | 27.93% | State | 3.9 | 3.8 | 3.6 | 4.6 |
| 16 | DIR-OFFICE OF MS HWY SAFETY PTL | \$201,880 | 0% | State | 3.9 | 3.8 | 3.6 | 4.6 |
| 17 | DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF NARCOTICS | \$201,880 | 0% | State | 3.9 | 3.8 | 3.6 | 4.6 |
| 18 | EXEC DIR-JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE | \$200,000 | 0% | State | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.5 | 4.4 |
| 19 | EXEC DIR-MEDICAL LICENSURE BD | \$200,000 | 0% | State | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.5 | 4.4 |
| 20 | PETAL SCHOOL Dist Superintendent | \$200,000 | 0% | School District | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.5 | 4.4 |
| 21 | HARRISON CO SCHOOL Dist Superintendent | \$200,000 | 5.10% | School District | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.5 | 4.4 |
| 22 | MADISON CO SCHOOL Dist Superintendent | \$200,000 | 0% | School District | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.5 | 4.4 |
| 23 | EXEC DIR - DEPT OF HUMAN SERV | \$198,092 | 16.25% | State | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.5 | 4.4 |
| 24 | VICKSBURG WARREN SCHOOL Dist Superintendent | \$195,800 | 0% | School District | 3.6 | 3.6 | 3.4 | 4.3 |
| 25 | EXEC DIR-DEPT OF FIN AND ADMIN | \$193,902 | 0% | State | 3.6 | 3.6 | 3.4 | 4.3 |
| 26 | COMMISSIONER BANKING | \$190,844 | 0% | State | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.3 | 4.2 |
| 27 | OCEAN SPRINGS SCHOOL Dist Superintendent | \$185,000 | 0% | School District | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.3 | 4.2 |
| 28 | STARKVILLE - OKTIBBEHA CONS Dist Superintendent | \$185,000 | 0% | School District | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.3 | 4.2 |
| 29 | RANKIN CO SCHOOL Dist Superintendent | \$185,000 | 0% | School District | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.3 | 4.2 |
| 30 | COMMISSIONER REVENUE | \$184,779 | 0% | State | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.3 | 4.2 |

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|----|---|-----------|--------|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 31 | EXEC DIR - DIVISION OF MEDICAID | \$184,434 | 0.65% | State | 3.4 | 3.4 | 3.2 | 4.1 |
| 32 | EXEC DIR - PUBLIC EMPLOYEES RET SYS | \$183,812 | 2.68% | State | 3.4 | 3.4 | 3.2 | 4.1 |
| 33 | CLINTON PUBLIC SCHOOL Dist Superintendent | \$183,750 | 5% | School District | 3.4 | 3.4 | 3.2 | 4.1 |
| 34 | HUMPHREYS CO SCHOOL Dist Superintendent | \$183,500 | 0.82% | School District | 3.4 | 3.4 | 3.2 | 4.1 |
| 35 | TIER III AGENCY HEAD | \$183,240 | 0% | State | 3.4 | 3.4 | 3.2 | 4.1 |
| 36 | MCCOMB SCHOOL Dist Superintendent RICT | \$182,361 | 0% | School District | 3.4 | 3.4 | 3.2 | 4.1 |
| 37 | OXFORD SCHOOL Dist Superintendent RICT | \$180,000 | 20% | School District | 3.4 | 3.4 | 3.2 | 4.1 |
| 38 | NEW ALBANY PUBLIC SCHOOLS Superintendent | \$176,715 | 59.20% | School District | 3.3 | 3.2 | 3.1 | 3.9 |
| 39 | EXEC DIR - DIV OF FAM/CHILD SERVICES | \$175,920 | 9.95% | State | 3.3 | 3.2 | 3.1 | 3.9 |
| 40 | COMMISSIONER PUBLIC SAFETY | \$175,664 | 0% | State | 3.3 | 3.2 | 3.1 | 3.9 |
| 41 | HATTIESBURG PUBLIC SCHOOL Dist Superintendent | \$175,000 | 0% | School District | 3.3 | 3.2 | 3.1 | 3.9 |
| 42 | JONES CO SCHOOL Dist Superintendent | \$175,000 | 0% | School District | 3.3 | 3.2 | 3.1 | 3.9 |
| 43 | EXEC DIR - EDUCATIONAL TV | \$174,665 | 0% | State | 3.3 | 3.2 | 3.1 | 3.9 |
| 44 | SUPREME COURT, CHIEF JUSTICE | \$174,000 | 0% | State | 3.3 | 3.2 | 3.1 | 3.9 |
| 45 | EXEC DIR - DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION | \$173,729 | 0% | State | 3.3 | 3.2 | 3.1 | 3.9 |

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|----|-------------------------------|-----------|----|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 46 | EXEC DIR - PHARMACY BOARD | \$172,684 | 0% | State | 3.2 | 3.2 | 2.9 | 3.8 |
| 47 | DENTIST | \$171,555 | 0% | State | 3.2 | 3.2 | 2. | 3.8 |
| 48 | PHARMACY TEAM LEAD | \$171,555 | 0% | State | 3.2 | 3.2 | 2.9 | 3.8 |
| 49 | BN - DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR | \$171,237 | 0% | State | 3.2 | 3.2 | 2.9 | 3.8 |
| 50 | DPS - DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR | \$171,237 | 0% | State | 3.2 | 3.2 | 2.9 | 3.8 |

Table B: Mississippi School District Superintendents Salary Performance, 2023

Given that a large percentage of the top 50 salaries belong to school district superintendents, we have included all the school district salaries in the table below. All salary information in this table was sourced via a public records request submitted to the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE).

In reviewing and ranking all of the superintendent salaries, we took three primary factors into account: the total student enrollment of the district, the MDE-provided rating of the school district, and the actual salary itself.

In addition to columns including these raw statistics, we have added an additional column that accounts for district performance, as it is connected to superintendent salary. We have converted each district's letter grade to a corresponding number. The better the letter grade, the higher the numerical grade number will be, ranging from 5 (grade A) to 1 (grade F). These grade numbers were then multiplied by student enrollment to obtain a total number of "quality points." For instance, a district with 1,000 students would have 5,000 quality points with an A grade, but it would only have 1,000 quality points if it had an F grade.

In relation to superintendents, these quality points were then divided into the superintendents' salaries. If a superintendent had a salary of \$100,000, and the district only had 1,000 quality points, that would equate to \$100 per quality point. If the district had 5,000 quality points, that would equate to only \$20 per quality point. We believe that this measurement accurately assesses both academic outcomes and the responsibility that comes with increased student enrollment.

| School District | Salary | Enrollment | Grade | District Points | Cost Per Grade Point |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|------------|-------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Leflore Legacy Academy | \$90,000 | 195 | D | 390 | \$230.77 |
| Humphreys County School District | \$183,500 | 1,257 | F | 1,257 | \$145.98 |
| Hollandale School District | \$125,000 | 524 | D | 1,048 | \$119.27 |
| Amite County School District | \$102,000 | 886 | F | 886 | \$115.12 |
| West Tallahatchie School District | \$107,500 | 554 | D | 1,108 | \$97.02 |
| Wilkinson County School District | \$92,000 | 1,016 | F | 1,016 | \$90.55 |
| Reimagine Prep | \$149,425 | 568 | C | 1,704 | \$87.69 |
| Coahoma County School District | \$147,902 | 1,057 | D | 2,114 | \$69.96 |
| Joel E. Smilow Collegiate | \$149,425 | 582 | B | 2,328 | \$64.19 |

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|--|-----------|-------|---|-------|---------|
| West Bolivar Consolidated School District | \$119,167 | 930 | D | 1,860 | \$64.07 |
| Clarksdale Municipal School District | \$135,000 | 2,108 | F | 2,108 | \$64.04 |
| Leland School District | \$125,000 | 673 | C | 2,019 | \$61.91 |
| Okolona Separate School District | \$95,985 | 521 | C | 1,563 | \$61.41 |
| Noxubee County School District | \$170,000 | 1,391 | D | 2,782 | \$61.11 |
| East Tallahatchie Consolidated School District | \$97,000 | 905 | D | 1,810 | \$53.59 |
| Forrest County Agricultural High School | \$160,127 | 600 | A | 3,000 | \$53.38 |
| Yazoo City Municipal School District | \$113,300 | 2,124 | F | 2,124 | \$53.34 |
| Richton School District | \$107,500 | 571 | B | 2,284 | \$47.07 |
| Philadelphia Public School District | \$115,000 | 826 | C | 2,478 | \$46.41 |
| Kemper County School District | \$125,000 | 915 | C | 2,745 | \$45.54 |
| North Bolivar Consolidated School District | \$115,000 | 843 | C | 2,529 | \$45.47 |
| Newton Municipal School District | \$113,000 | 841 | C | 2,523 | \$44.79 |
| North Panola School District | \$108,000 | 1,253 | D | 2,506 | \$43.10 |
| Coffeeville School District | \$50,400 | 401 | C | 1,203 | \$41.90 |
| Benton County School District | \$115,000 | 917 | C | 2,751 | \$41.80 |
| Perry County School District | \$115,000 | 953 | C | 2,859 | \$40.22 |
| Carroll County School District | \$101,000 | 851 | C | 2,553 | \$39.56 |
| Aberdeen School District | \$121,000 | 1,043 | C | 3,129 | \$38.67 |
| South Delta School District | \$95,000 | 618 | B | 2,472 | \$38.43 |
| Baldwyn School District | \$115,250 | 752 | B | 3,008 | \$38.31 |
| Holly Springs School District | \$122,423 | 1,076 | C | 3,228 | \$37.93 |
| Winona-Montgomery Consolidated District | \$125,500 | 1,176 | C | 3,528 | \$35.57 |
| Quitman County School District | \$95,000 | 898 | C | 2,694 | \$35.26 |
| Attala County School District | \$135,000 | 1,002 | B | 4,008 | \$33.68 |
| Corinth School District | \$250,780 | 2,501 | C | 7,503 | \$33.42 |

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|--|-----------|-------|---|-------|---------|
| East Jasper Consolidated School District | \$105,369 | 790 | B | 3,160 | \$33.34 |
| Jefferson County School District | \$102,000 | 1,037 | C | 3,111 | \$32.79 |
| Franklin County School District | \$114,000 | 1,193 | C | 3,579 | \$31.85 |
| Moss Point Separate School District | \$147,398 | 1,579 | C | 4,737 | \$31.12 |
| Hazlehurst City School District | \$130,000 | 1,413 | C | 4,239 | \$30.67 |
| Nettleton School District | \$102,500 | 1,162 | C | 3,486 | \$29.40 |
| Water Valley School District | \$125,000 | 1,069 | B | 4,276 | \$29.23 |
| Yazoo County School District | \$120,000 | 1,370 | C | 4,110 | \$29.20 |
| Western Line School District | \$145,000 | 1,664 | C | 4,992 | \$29.05 |
| Jefferson Davis County School District | \$110,000 | 1,279 | C | 3,837 | \$28.67 |
| Mccomb School District | \$182,361 | 2,242 | C | 6,726 | \$27.11 |
| South Pike School District | \$130,000 | 1,609 | C | 4,827 | \$26.93 |
| Quitman School District | \$128,000 | 1,595 | C | 4,785 | \$26.75 |
| Choctaw County School District | \$158,166 | 1,218 | A | 6,090 | \$25.97 |
| Columbia School District | \$160,808 | 1,573 | B | 6,292 | \$25.56 |
| Forest Municipal School District | \$126,525 | 1,654 | C | 4,962 | \$25.50 |
| North Tippah School District | \$118,000 | 1,294 | B | 5,176 | \$22.80 |
| Holmes Consolidated School District | \$170,000 | 2,502 | C | 7,506 | \$22.65 |
| West Jasper Consolidated Schools | \$117,987 | 1,319 | B | 5,276 | \$22.36 |
| Walthall County School District | \$111,400 | 1,689 | C | 5,067 | \$21.99 |
| Greenville Public School District | \$160,000 | 3,668 | D | 7,336 | \$21.81 |
| Senatobia Municipal School District | \$144,000 | 1,651 | B | 6,604 | \$21.80 |
| Booneville School District | \$139,250 | 1,279 | A | 6,395 | \$21.77 |
| Lawrence County School District | \$115,000 | 1,770 | C | 5,310 | \$21.66 |
| Union Public School District | \$100,000 | 932 | A | 4,660 | \$21.46 |
| Enterprise School District | \$95,000 | 933 | A | 4,665 | \$20.36 |
| Greenwood-Leflore Consolidated School District | \$160,000 | 3,978 | D | 7,956 | \$20.11 |

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|--|-----------|-------|---|--------|---------|
| Amory School District | \$123,000 | 1,537 | B | 6,148 | \$20.01 |
| Laurel School District | \$162,000 | 2,800 | C | 8,400 | \$19.29 |
| Brookhaven School District | \$145,000 | 2,657 | C | 7,971 | \$18.19 |
| Bay St. Louis Waveland School District | \$156,000 | 1,736 | A | 8,680 | \$17.97 |
| Louisville Municipal School District | \$135,000 | 2,625 | C | 7,875 | \$17.14 |
| New Albany Public Schools | \$176,715 | 2,113 | A | 10,565 | \$16.73 |
| Greene County School District | \$106,710 | 1,659 | B | 6,636 | \$16.08 |
| Pass Christian Public School District | \$154,000 | 1,978 | A | 9,890 | \$15.57 |
| West Point Consolidated School District | \$126,788 | 2,732 | C | 8,196 | \$15.47 |
| Cleveland School District | \$128,700 | 2,877 | C | 8,631 | \$14.91 |
| Poplarville Separate School District | \$136,364 | 1,830 | A | 9,150 | \$14.90 |
| Kosciusko School District | \$130,500 | 2,198 | B | 8,792 | \$14.84 |
| Simpson County School District | \$140,000 | 3,146 | C | 9,438 | \$14.83 |
| North Pike School District | \$130,600 | 2,219 | B | 8,876 | \$14.71 |
| Marshall County School District | \$120,000 | 2,758 | C | 8,274 | \$14.50 |
| Copiah County School District | \$99,556 | 2,298 | C | 6,894 | \$14.44 |
| Forrest County School District | \$152,982 | 2,160 | A | 10,800 | \$14.17 |
| Marion County School District | \$110,000 | 1,942 | B | 7,768 | \$14.16 |
| Picayune School District | \$135,000 | 3,315 | C | 9,945 | \$13.57 |
| Newton County School District | \$115,000 | 1,703 | A | 8,515 | \$13.51 |
| Covington County School District | \$104,000 | 2,605 | C | 7,815 | \$13.31 |
| Smith County School District | \$130,000 | 2,475 | B | 9,900 | \$13.13 |
| South Tippah School District | \$131,000 | 2,533 | B | 10,132 | \$12.93 |
| Tate County School District | \$102,000 | 2,036 | B | 8,144 | \$12.52 |
| Sunflower County Consolidate School District | \$152,607 | 3,059 | B | 12,236 | \$12.47 |
| Lincoln County School District | \$138,000 | 2,789 | B | 11,156 | \$12.37 |
| Wayne County School District | \$140,000 | 2,851 | B | 11,404 | \$12.28 |

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|--|-----------|-------|---|--------|---------|
| Webster County School District | \$105,000 | 1,758 | A | 8,790 | \$11.95 |
| Meridian Public School District | \$170,000 | 4,758 | C | 14,274 | \$11.91 |
| Calhoun County School District | \$100,287 | 2,180 | B | 8,720 | \$11.50 |
| Grenada School District | \$218,106 | 3,806 | A | 19,030 | \$11.46 |
| Pontotoc City School District | \$130,000 | 2,298 | A | 11,490 | \$11.31 |
| Monroe County School District | \$120,000 | 2,137 | A | 10,685 | \$11.23 |
| Natchez-Adams School District | \$126,000 | 2,829 | B | 11,316 | \$11.13 |
| Canton Public School District | \$135,000 | 3,071 | B | 12,284 | \$10.99 |
| Hinds County School District | \$225,869 | 5,140 | B | 20,560 | \$10.99 |
| Scott County School District | \$170,000 | 3,875 | B | 15,500 | \$10.97 |
| Lafayette County School District | \$149,350 | 2,776 | A | 13,880 | \$10.76 |
| Chickasaw County School Dist | \$110,000 | 2,211 | A | 11,055 | \$9.95 |
| Neshoba County School District | \$150,122 | 3,091 | A | 15,455 | \$9.71 |
| Hattiesburg Public School District | \$175,000 | 3,631 | A | 18,155 | \$9.64 |
| Starkville- Oktibbeha Consolidated School District | \$185,000 | 4,902 | B | 19,608 | \$9.43 |
| Stone County School District | \$113,629 | 2,411 | A | 12,055 | \$9.43 |
| Petal School District | \$200,000 | 4,264 | A | 21,320 | \$9.38 |
| South Panola School District | \$159,000 | 4,260 | B | 17,040 | \$9.33 |
| Union County School District | \$135,000 | 2,961 | A | 14,805 | \$9.12 |
| Columbus Municipal School District | \$87,500 | 3,213 | C | 9,639 | \$9.08 |
| Prentiss County School District | \$100,000 | 2,288 | A | 11,440 | \$8.74 |
| Tishomingo County School District | \$121,500 | 2,893 | A | 14,465 | \$8.40 |
| Long Beach School District | \$120,000 | 2,915 | A | 14,575 | \$8.23 |
| Alcorn School District | \$120,000 | 3,131 | A | 15,655 | \$7.67 |
| Oxford School District | \$180,000 | 4,729 | A | 23,645 | \$7.61 |
| Hancock County School District | \$125,000 | 4,134 | B | 16,536 | \$7.56 |
| Pontotoc County School District | \$130,000 | 3,472 | A | 17,360 | \$7.49 |
| Pearl Public School District | \$150,000 | 4,071 | A | 20,355 | \$7.37 |
| Itawamba County School District | \$124,455 | 3,391 | A | 16,955 | \$7.34 |

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|------------------------------------|-----------|--------|---|---------|--------|
| Clinton Public School District | \$183,750 | 5,196 | A | 25,980 | \$7.07 |
| Vicksburg Warren School District | \$195,800 | 6,955 | B | 27,820 | \$7.04 |
| Tupelo Public School District | \$245,700 | 7,151 | A | 35,755 | \$6.87 |
| Ocean Springs School District | \$185,000 | 5,906 | A | 29,530 | \$6.26 |
| Lauderdale County School District | \$162,750 | 5,873 | A | 29,365 | \$5.54 |
| George County School District | \$112,000 | 4,083 | A | 20,415 | \$5.49 |
| Lee County School District | \$132,500 | 6,251 | B | 25,004 | \$5.30 |
| Biloxi Public School District | \$157,500 | 5,978 | A | 29,890 | \$5.27 |
| Gulfport School District | \$165,000 | 6,349 | A | 31,745 | \$5.20 |
| Jones County School District | \$175,000 | 8,541 | B | 34,164 | \$5.12 |
| Lowndes County School District | \$128,500 | 5,305 | A | 26,525 | \$4.84 |
| Pearl River County School District | \$62,500 | 3,334 | B | 13,336 | \$4.69 |
| Pascagoula Gautier School District | \$150,000 | 6,583 | A | 32,915 | \$4.56 |
| Jackson Public School District | \$243,000 | 19,348 | C | 58,044 | \$4.19 |
| Jackson County School District | \$162,000 | 8,823 | A | 44,115 | \$3.67 |
| Leake County School District | \$25,000 | 2,577 | C | 7,731 | \$3.23 |
| Lamar County School District | \$160,000 | 10,325 | A | 51,625 | \$3.10 |
| Madison County School District | \$200,000 | 13,032 | A | 65,160 | \$3.07 |
| Harrison County School District | \$200,000 | 14,318 | A | 71,590 | \$2.79 |
| Rankin County School District | \$185,000 | 18,598 | A | 92,990 | \$1.99 |
| Desoto County School District | \$217,227 | 34,469 | A | 172,345 | \$1.26 |

Possible Policy Solutions

How might we best restrain growth in top public sector salaries? How might we do this while still enabling large salaries to be given to individuals who bring rare expertise and insights to their positions that are in great demand?

To consider an example, a new chief operating officer was recently hired to fix the city of Jackson's water system. According to press reports, their salary is to be \$200,000 a year from separate sources. Any policy solution needs to ensure that it is possible to hire competent public officials with the essential skills to take on these kinds of key roles.

How might we do that while ensuring accountability? Here are some possible policy solutions:

1. **Require any salary increases above the Employment Cost Index (ECI) rate to be approved by the legislature:** In line with our findings that government salaries are continuing to increase faster than those in the private sector, we propose that the state legislature should be required to approve any salary increases for a particular position if that percentage increase is above the federal ECI for state and local employees.¹¹ The ECI is a standard figure that accounts for the national rate of change for government pay raises in the country. Currently, there are pushes for these actions, but they are not strong enough to substantiate policy changes.
2. **Create a state-mandated formula to calculate the maximum allowable salary for school superintendents:** In our review of the highest government salaries in the state, we observed that school district superintendents consistently have among the highest-paid salaries. The state has imposed high standards and limits on how much teachers can be paid,¹² yet we do not observe any such policy for school superintendents.¹³

To save taxpayer dollars and ensure transparency, we propose a schedule of acceptable salaries based on the population within the school district. This would help shift the focus from administrators to students. Since the legislature is allocating the funds, it should enact policies that will ensure that they are being properly spent.

3. **Cap more public sector pay below that earned by the state governor:** In 2016, a proposed state law, SB2341, aimed to do precisely this for school superintendent salaries. We need to ensure that setting an arbitrary cap does not have any unintended consequences.
4. **Initiate education funding reforms:** The high percentage of large salaries within school administration suggests the need for reforms regarding the way that school dollars are spent. Rather than maintaining the current state of relatively unlimited

authority in terms of how funding is spent, reforms should be considered that place a cap on how high a percentage of school spending may be allocated to administrative salaries.

5. **Amend the Mississippi Code:** The Mississippi Code contains provisions limiting the salaries and compensation of public officials, but it also includes a provision that provides for so many exemptions as to render the limits essentially meaningless. By simply amending Section 25-3-39 of the code to eliminate the exceptions, the salaries of state employees could be curbed, with any additional increase requiring further approval.



About the Mississippi Center for Public Policy

The Mississippi Center for Public Policy is an independent non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization. We campaign for lower taxes, lighter regulation, and limited government.

Mississippi is one of the poorest states in America, largely due to bad public policy. Our mission is to change this.

We have an exceptional track record of getting our policy proposals turned into law. We recently spearheaded campaigns that delivered:

- **The largest tax cut in Mississippi's history**
- **A universal occupational licensing law**
- **A law to combat Critical Race Theory**



Recent speakers at events hosted by the Mississippi Center for Public Policy have included Betsy DeVos and Riley Gaines.