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To: Interested Parties  
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## Polling Finds Tate Reeves in Vulnerable Position Ahead of the 2023 General Election

A recent Tulchin Research survey of likely voters in Mississippi finds incumbent Governor Tate Reeves in a vulnerable position ahead of his November 2023 bid for re-election. The poll which was conducted on behalf of the Southern Poverty Law Center Action Fund and the New Southern Majority PAC finds an electorate that is dissatisfied with the direction of the state, generally, and with the Governor's tenure in office, specifically, accentuated by his ties to the recent corruption scandal involving the misuse of Mississippi state welfare funds. Consequently, the Governor's prospects for reelection look tenuous, with his likely Democratic challenger Brandon Presley currently leading Reeves in a head-to-head contest. We present key poll results below.

### Governor Tate Reeves in Trouble

Complicating Reeves' current political standing, our polling finds that voters in Mississippi are dissatisfied with the current trajectory of the state with a majority (55%) believing that things in Mississippi are off on the wrong track. Conversely, only around 1-in-3 Mississippi voters (34%) say things in the state are heading in the right direction while another 11% say they are unsure.

#### Mississippi State Direction

<i>Do you feel things in Mississippi are going in the right direction or do you feel things have gotten off on the wrong track?</i>	
<b>Wrong Track</b>	<b>55%</b>
Right Direction	34%
Don't Know	11%
<b>Difference</b>	<b>Wrong Track +21</b>

Pessimism about Mississippi's direction has impacted Reeves' standing, with the Governor's favorable ratings now underwater by double digits. A majority of voters (54%) holds an "unfavorable" opinion of Reeves compared to 42% who view him favorably (-12 favorable-unfavorable). Furthermore, the intensity behind Reeves' detractors far outweighs that of his supporters, with 40% of voters saying they have a "very unfavorable" view of the Governor compared to just 16% who have a "very favorable" view of him.

#### Favorability Ratings of Governor Tate Reeves

<i>Do you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable opinion of Governor Tate Reeves?</i>	
<b>TOTAL FAVORABLE</b>	<b>42%</b>
Very Favorable	16%
<b>TOTAL UNFAVORABLE</b>	<b>54%</b>
<b>Very Unfavorable</b>	<b>40%</b>
Don't Know	3%
<b>Favorable – Unfavorable</b>	<b>-12</b>

As a result, Reeves appears vulnerable ahead of the November 2023 general election, with the survey showing him trailing his potential Democratic opponent, Public Service Commissioner and former Nettleton Mayor Brandon Presley in a head-to-head matchup. In the poll, Presley attracts the support of 47% of likely voters compared to 43% for Reeves (Presley +4) while 1-in-10 voters (10%) are undecided.

Furthermore, whereas voters have clearly soured in their views of Reeves, Presley is seen in a positive light, with 39% of voters holding a favorable opinion of him compared to just 18% who view him unfavorably (+21 favorable-unfavorable, 58% total name ID). Compared to Reeves’ personal profile which is underwater, this reflects a net +33 advantage in favorability ratings for Presley.

### November General Election Head-to-Head

*In thinking about the general election race for Governor later this year, if the election were held today and the candidates were (ROTATE) Tate Reeves, the Republican, [AND] Brandon Presley, the Democrat, for whom would you vote?*

<b><u>Brandon Presley</u></b>	<b><u>47%</u></b>
Tate Reeves	43%
Undecided	10%
<b>Presley-Reeves</b>	<b>Presley +4</b>

### The Cloud of the TANF Scandal Is Also Hurting Reeves

Reeves’ political prospects are further hurt by the recent highly publicized scandal involving the misuse of Mississippi TANF (welfare) funds. Notably, this scandal has grabbed the public’s attention as more than 9 out of 10 voters (92%) say they have seen or heard something about it recently, including more than half (55%) who say they have heard a lot about it.

### Awareness of Mississippi TANF (Welfare) Scandal

*Have you heard anything about a scandal involving misuses of Mississippi welfare money that involved Brett Favre and other prominent figures? (IF YES) Have you heard a lot, some, or only a little about this scandal?*

<b><u>Yes, a lot</u></b>	<b><u>55%</u></b>
Yes, some	29%
Yes, only a little	9%
No	7%
Don't Know	1%
<b><u>Total Yes</u></b>	<b><u>92%</u></b>
Yes – No	+86

The broad awareness of this scandal has inflicted real harm on the Governor’s standing with voters. In the poll, after asking whether they had heard of this scandal, voters were given a short additional description about its details including the Governor’s decision to fire an attorney who was charged with investigating the matter. Following this short description, nearly two-thirds of voters (64%) said what they heard made them feel **unfavorable** about Reeves, including nearly half (46%) who said it made them feel **very unfavorable** about him.

**Negative Opinions of Governor Tate Reeves’ Involvement in the Mississippi TANF (Welfare) Scandal**

*The Mississippi welfare funds scandal, the largest public corruption case in state history, involved the misuse of over \$90 million in funds meant to help impoverished families. High-profile figures, such as former NFL quarterback Brett Favre, also benefited from the scandal, including funds for a volleyball facility for his daughter’s university. Several state officials were arrested and convicted as a result, and Governor Tate Reeves fired an attorney investigating the matter, which some people see as further efforts to cover it up.*

*Would you say you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of Governor Tate Reeves as a result of this scandal?*

<b>TOTAL FAVORABLE</b>	<b>25%</b>
Very Favorable	11%
<b><u>TOTAL UNFAVORABLE</u></b>	<b><u>64%</u></b>
<b><u>Very Unfavorable</u></b>	<b><u>46%</u></b>
Don’t Know	10%
<b>Favorable – Unfavorable</b>	<b>-39</b>

**Conclusion**

Ahead of the November 2023 general election, incumbent Governor Tate Reeves faces strong political headwinds as voters are dissatisfied with the current trajectory of the state and have soured in their views of the Governor and his job managing the state. In particular, voters are very disappointed with the Governor’s involvement in the state’s welfare funding scandal. As a result, there is a legitimate opportunity for a candidate like Brandon Presley to give a serious challenge to Reeves as our polling shows Presley currently leading the incumbent in a general election matchup.

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**Survey Methodology:** Tulchin Research conducted a survey among 500 likely November 2023 general election voters in Mississippi. Interviews were conducted with live professional callers dialing landlines and cell phones. The survey also captured responses online via e-mail and text message. The survey was conducted from January 21 – 25, 2023. The overall margin of error for this survey is +/- 4.38 percent.