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GOVERNOR BARBOUR DECLARES MISSISSIPPI TOURISM WEEK

Jackson, Mississippi (May 9, 2009) – Governor Haley Barbour has proclaimed this week as Mississippi Tourism Week. The Mississippi tourism industry is celebrating the 26th Annual National Travel and Tourism Week, the tourism industry's commemorative event that runs through May 17.

“Travel and tourism plays a key role in the economy,” said Governor Haley Barbour. “Our state relies on travel for tax revenue and jobs and the benefits these bring to our economy. With this week’s activities we hope to raise awareness and showcase why travel matters.”

This year's schedule includes special activities each day at the 12 Mississippi Welcome Centers. In celebration of Travel Rally Day, Tuesday, May 12, Governor Haley Barbour will unveil the new "Welcome to Mississippi" signs at a 1:30 p.m. press conference in the Community Room of the Jackson/Evers International Airport.

The Mississippi Tourism Week event will emphasize the economic benefits travel and tourism brings to local workers and communities. This event is part of a larger effort led by the U.S. Travel Association with rallies in dozens of cities nationwide.

In Mississippi the travel industry employs 85,000 direct jobs and contributes \$436.4 million in Tourism State tax revenues. Travel industry employees include everyone from hotel employees and restaurant workers to meetings planners and Convention and Visitors Bureau executives who serve visitors. Travel and tourism is one of Mississippi’s largest industries, with \$6 billion in travel expenditures by domestic and international travelers.

When President Ronald Reagan signed the first Proclamation for National Tourism Week during a White House ceremony 26 years ago, he said, "I think the importance of travel and tourism goes far beyond economics. Experiencing America firsthand provides outstanding educational opportunities and is terrific for personal growth. And where in the world is there a more beautiful place to travel, have fun, and relax than in America?"

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