



## Mississippi Office of the State Auditor Shad White

### State Government Employment in Mississippi: Trends Toward Smaller Government

A Special Projects Division Brief

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#### MS State Government Employees: 2017/18

Average Age:  
45.2

Gender:  
39% Male  
61% Female

Job Location:  
45% Jackson Metro Area  
55% Outside Metro Area

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*Ratio of citizens to state employees, showing Mississippi has improved efficiency:*

2010      2017

Louisiana:  
48:1      66:1

Arkansas:  
51:1      50:1

Mississippi:  
94:1      108:1

Tennessee:  
143:1      167:1

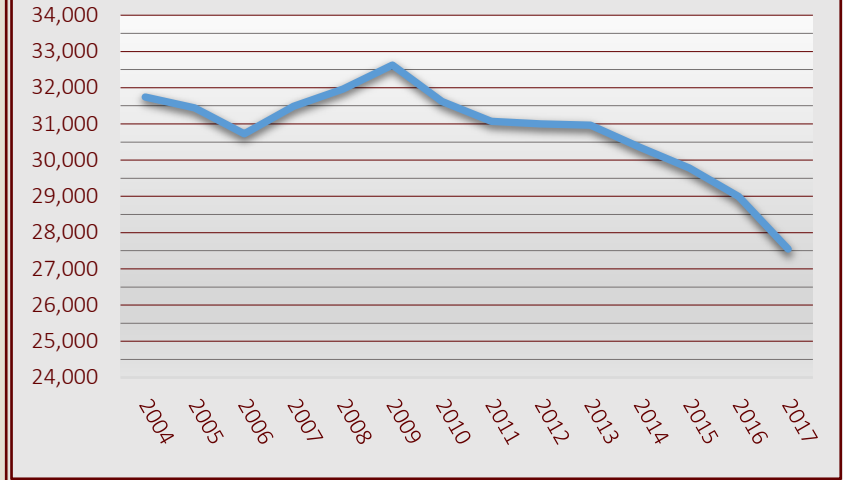
Alabama:  
144:1      158:1

Over the past 15 years—and even more noticeably in the last seven years—the total number of state government employees in Mississippi has declined. Data from the Mississippi State Personnel Board show these trends:

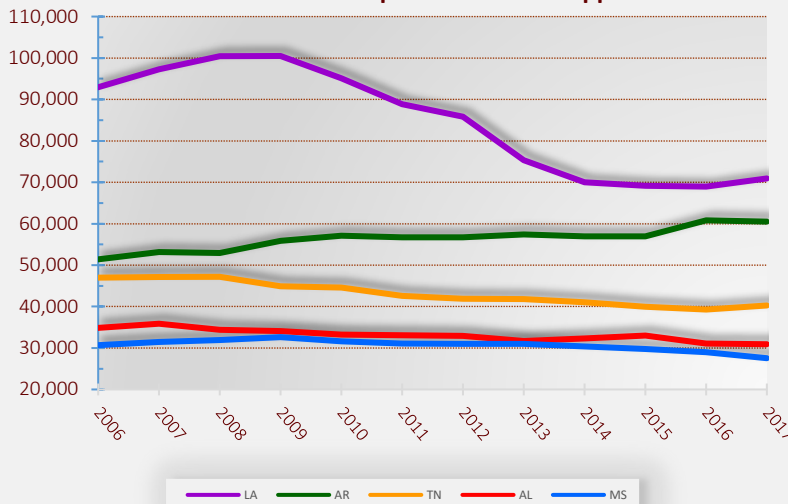
Since 2004, the State has reduced its workforce by more than 5,200 people. More than 4,500 of this reduction has been in the last seven years. While there have been reductions-in-force (RIFs) actions at some state agencies—The Office of the State Auditor underwent two such RIFs in the last decade—most of the reductions have been through attrition and voluntary separations, which include resignations and retirement. In fact, in FY 2018, 65% of those who left state government left through resignations, and 13% of those who left state government retired. Aside from reduction by attrition, the State has likely also been able to reduce the workforce through increased use of technology and automated services. For instance, automating certain processes using kiosks or online services may eliminate unnecessary positions.

The trend toward smaller government is common in the Southeast. With the exception of Arkansas, Mississippi and the surrounding states have all decreased the size of their government workforce over the last decade. During the last few years, Arkansas, Louisiana, Alabama, and Tennessee have had some form of a hiring freeze in effect. The graph to the left shows the state government employment trends in all five states since 2006.

**Total MS State Government Positions:  
June 30, 2004-2017**



**Total State Government Employment:  
A Four State Comparison to Mississippi**



Mississippi should continue to “right size” government to eliminate waste. Policymakers will also have to ensure employment reductions do not interfere with core functions of government, like responding to disasters or maintaining public safety. Over the next five years, more than 1/4 of state employees will be eligible to retire, so the State will need to continue training the employees who are left, or who are just starting, so that they have the necessary skills to provide the same or better services. Some of the savings realized through position reductions can be used to improve training for the remaining employees and increase the use of technology.

Data for surrounding states came from the annual Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for each state.