



MISSISSIPPI  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS



# PRESS RELEASE

Date: May 25, 2010  
Phone: (601) 359-5689

Contact: Kent Crocker  
Fax: (601) 359-5624

**Mississippi Corrections Commissioner  
Christopher B. Epps  
Elected American Correctional Association President**

---

Mississippi Department of Corrections Commissioner Christopher B. Epps has been elected as president of the prestigious American Correctional Association. Commissioner Epps will be the 102<sup>nd</sup> president of the organization. The first ACA president was Rutherford B. Hayes. Hayes later became the nineteenth president of the United States.

The American Correctional Association (ACA), originally founded in 1870 as the National Prison Association, is an international organization of correctional administrators and professionals in various correctional disciplines. At the 1954 Congress of Correction in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the name of the American Prison Association was changed to the American Correctional Association. The organization is composed of more than 20,000 members from 60 countries. Approximately 450 Mississippians are members of the organization.

As ACA president, Commissioner Epps will head a major publishing operation. The ACA magazine *Corrections Today* is the leading correctional publication. It is accompanied by over 300 other ACA publications, training curricula and videos. The ACA is a primary source of training for correctional professionals. In recognition of the growing correctional health care profession, ACA also publishes *Correctional Health Today*.

Mississippi is a long term beneficiary of the ACA. Through the American Correctional Association accreditation program, under the leadership of Commissioner Epps, the Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) has developed and or enhanced institutional programs, agency operating procedures and overall safety. This improvement is partially responsible for a decrease in recidivism from 34 percent 2003 in to the current 30 percent. Through the accreditation process, Mississippi became the 14<sup>th</sup> state to receive the ACA Eagle Award. The Eagle Award signifies that every aspect of a correctional agency that can be accredited has been accredited. Since Mississippi received the Eagle Award on August 11, 2008, one other state has received the award. Apart from the agency's accreditation, several MDOC employees have become accredited through the ACA thus enhancing their value to the taxpayers of Mississippi.

Governor Barbour praised the Mississippi Department of Corrections, under the leadership of Commissioner Christopher Epps, for improvements in agency management and fiscal responsibility. Governor Barbour stated "It is a testimony to the leadership of the MDOC that the agency received full accreditation by an international association that Chris Epps later became president of, even while MDOC reduced its operating costs by more than \$100 million during a 5-year period."

James Gondles, Executive Director of the American Correctional Association stated "In our rich and varied 140 year history only 102 women and men have been called to serve in the ACA Presidency. These leaders were the trail-blazers in our industry, the people with ideas to shape new plans for rehabilitation, to enhance public safety, and to turn offender lives around. Commissioner Epps has been called to lead and he certainly fits that pattern. We are excited about our future with President Elect Epps at the helm."

Commissioner Epps states, "The American Correctional Association has provided me with the professional network to understand the approaches that are working in the other states and various member nations. This has been a valuable component in Mississippi's endeavor to improve quality while reducing expenditures." He went on to express his heartfelt appreciation for Governor Barbour's support, the support of James Gondles, and for the membership of the ACA as a whole. He said, "In my 28 years in the Mississippi Department of Corrections and my 8 years as Commissioner of Corrections, I have always known my fellow employees as a second family and have never questioned their support. Each and every one of them knows that this wasn't just an election of Chris Epps: It was recognition of the Mississippi Department of Corrections as the best corrections agency in the U.S. and the best state agency in Mississippi. As proud as my other family is of me, I am doubly proud of them."

##