

Mississippi Development Authority
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**SPEED NAMES NEW DIRECTOR OF
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

JACKSON, Miss. - Mississippi Development Authority executive director, Leland R. Speed, announced today the appointment of D. Craig Ray as the Director of the Tourism Development Division. Ray's professional profile includes over 15 years of experience in progressively challenging positions, encompassing strategic, operational, sales and marketing skills across business and political organizations.

"Craig has proven strengths in the areas of management, including strong team building and problem solving abilities. He has a reputation for implementing visions and strategies with an absolute commitment to bottom-line results. He will serve the state's tourism industry and MDA extremely well," stated Leland R. Speed, MDA executive director.

Ray most recently served the Barbour Inaugural Committee as the Deputy Executive Director-Inauguration Activities ("Mississippi's Moment") where he supervised, coordinated and ensured logistical and operational success of 21 statewide functions. He also served as a Senior Advisor to Governor Haley Barbour and assisted with a broad scope of issues with a variety of responsibilities. Ray previously held a position in the Office of Presidential Advance in the White House as the Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Advance for Event Coordination. Ray graduated from the University of Mississippi where he earned a degree in Business Administration.

With an annual budget of \$9.2 million, the Mississippi Development Authority's Tourism Development Division promotes Mississippi as a destination for business and leisure travel, operates the state's Welcome Centers, includes the Mississippi Film Office and manages the Mississippi Hometown Retirement Program. The 80-person staff markets the state to group and consumer travelers domestically and internationally by working with tour operators and travel planners; assisting communities with tourism development; providing consumers with information; conducting research; and promoting the state through the media with specific emphasis on regional markets.

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