



MISSISSIPPI STATE
UNIVERSITY®

March 24, 2016

The Honorable Phil Bryant
Governor of Mississippi
P.O. Box 139
Jackson, Mississippi 39205

Dear Governor Bryant,

I am writing today on behalf of the wonderful young people who comprise the Mississippi State University Student Association and the distinguished scholars and educators represented by the MSU Robert Holland Faculty Senate to respectfully bring to your attention their substantial efforts to speak forcefully in the cause of changing the State Flag of the State of Mississippi.

As you know, in 2001, the MSU Faculty Senate and the MSU Student Association Senate voted overwhelmingly in support of changing the state flag of Mississippi prior to the failed statewide voter referendum on that question.

Last year, after the tragic atrocity at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, those same leadership groups on our campus again convened to speak to the issue of changing our state flag – again adopting formal resolutions in support of that action.

Certainly, I have a profound understanding that this is an emotional issue for people of good will who hold differing views. I have heard from individuals on both sides, and their views reinforce the point I made in a public statement released on July 9, 2015, that a state's flag should be unifying and not a symbol that divides us. I pray that we can have a renewed debate about the current state flag's future and that such a necessary discussion can be conducted in a respectful and civil manner.

I have stated publicly on multiple occasions that I support changing the state flag. I have been consistent in advocating for positive change on this issue and I will continue to do so. I have publicly applauded the actions of the MSU Student Association and the Robert Holland Faculty Senate for the passage of similar resolutions also calling for change by our state's elected leadership.

Unfortunately, the broader issue of actually changing our state flag will not be resolved on a university campus. Legally and politically, the authority and responsibility for actually changing or amending the state flag rests with our state's elected leaders.

Office of the President

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Earlier this month, I shared my views on this question during remarks at MSU's Black Alumni Weekend Gala and the support for state flag change by those loyal and involved Bulldogs was strong and unequivocal.

So that you might more fully appreciate the earnest and heartfelt beliefs of our faculty and student leadership, I enclose copies of resolutions from both the MSU Student Association and a resolution from the combined faculty senates of the state's universities.

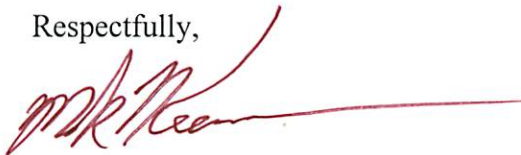
Likewise, I am sharing this information with the Speaker of the Mississippi House of Representatives and the Lieutenant Governor.

As you know, I have made my views on this issue known in personal visits with our elected executive and legislative branch officials. I have already expressed my beliefs to the leadership of the College Board. I am hopeful that the university's current stance on this issue – one that respects state law until the law is changed - positions me to speak effectively with our state's leaders in support of positive change as we move forward.

Thank you for your longstanding support for MSU and for the important role the university plays in moving Mississippi forward. Thank you for allowing me to utilize this means to share the hopes and aspirations of involved leaders among our students, faculty, and alumni with you.

I continue to be grateful for your friendship.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read "Mark E. Keenum", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark E. Keenum
President