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GOVERNOR-ELECT PHIL BRYANT NAMES BARKSDALE TO LEAD STATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

*Jim Barksdale to serve as Interim Executive Director of Mississippi
Development Authority*

JACKSON – Governor-elect Phil Bryant appointed Jim Barksdale Interim Executive Director of the Mississippi Development Authority at a 2 p.m. press conference on Jan. 4 in Jackson.

Barksdale, former President and CEO of Netscape Communications Corp., will succeed Leland Speed as chief of the agency that leads Mississippi's economic development efforts.

"When I campaigned for governor, economic development and job creation were cornerstones of my campaign," said Gov.-elect Phil Bryant. "This position is so important to my administration that I wanted it to be the first that I announced."

"Jim's extensive experience makes him the perfect candidate to play a major role in creating jobs and growing our state's economy. I look forward to working with him and letting the world know that Mississippi is open for business," Bryant said.

Barksdale, who currently serves as Chairman of the Board and President of Barksdale Management Corp., will lead MDA in recruiting new businesses to Mississippi and will work to strengthen and expand existing businesses in the state.

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“I am very honored to have the opportunity to serve Mississippi in this capacity,” Barksdale said. “I am confident that we will continue to attract new businesses to our state and will establish Mississippi as an outstanding place to do business.”

Barksdale has served Mississippi by leading Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts in his position as chairman of the Governor’s Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal, an appointment he received from Gov. Haley Barbour. Most recently, Barksdale was appointed chairman of the Mississippi Broadband Connect Coalition.

His career as an entrepreneur includes serving as President and CEO of Netscape Communications Corp. from Jan. 1995 until the company’s merger with America Online in 1999. After the merger, Barksdale joined the Board of Directors for AOL’s parent company Time Warner. Prior to that, he was the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Federal Express Corp. for more than ten years. Barksdale has held other management positions and has received numerous awards and accolades throughout his career, including induction into the Mississippi Business Hall of Fame.

Barksdale, a Jackson native, is a graduate of Murrah High School in Jackson and the University of Mississippi. Under his guidance in 2000, The Barksdale Foundation funded the Barksdale Reading Institute. More recently, Barksdale and his wife Donna funded the Mississippi Principal Corps, a program designed to change the way school principals are trained.

Barksdale’s appointment marks the first major announcement by Gov.-elect Phil Bryant. Barksdale will serve on an interim basis until a permanent appointment is made. Bryant will be sworn in as Mississippi’s 64th governor at 12 p.m. on Jan. 10.

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Phil Bryant was elected Governor of Mississippi with 62 percent of the vote in November 2011 and will be sworn-in as the state’s 64th Governor on January 10, 2012. He was sworn-in as Mississippi’s 37th Lieutenant Governor on January 10, 2008 after capturing 59 percent of the vote in the November election. He started his career in public service as a Hinds County Deputy Sheriff and was elected to the Mississippi House of Representatives from District 59 in Rankin County in 1992 and re-elected in 1995. Bryant was appointed State Auditor by the late Governor Kirk Fordice and re-elected overwhelmingly in 1999 and without opposition in 2003.