

Thursday, October 2 at 9 a.m.

A Capitol of Horrors: How the Business Community Battled the PBM Boogeymen

Presenters:



Description: During the 2025 Mississippi legislative session, members of the business community stood united in the face of an aggressive push for PBM reform—legislation that would have increased healthcare costs for employer-sponsored plans and, ultimately, for employees. This panel discussion will offer a behind-the-scenes look at the coordinated advocacy efforts that helped stop these proposals. Panelists will also share how independent pharmacists turned up the pressure at the Capitol and on social media, often crossing the line from policy debate to personal attacks. Join us as we unpack the tactics used, the lessons learned, and what the business community is planning as we head toward another potentially ghoulish session in 2026.

Objective: To provide attendees with an inside look at the business community's response to 2025 PBM reform efforts in Mississippi, highlight the challenges faced during legislative and public battles, and outline strategies for continued advocacy and engagement in the 2026 session.

Derek Easley President and CEO BIPEC

Derek Easley serves as President and CEO of the Business and Industry Political Education Committee (BIPEC), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that unites individuals, companies, and more than 30 trade and professional associations to protect and advance free enterprise in Mississippi. Since its founding over 40 years ago, BIPEC has played a critical role in evaluating and informing the business community about the performance of elected officials on issues that impact the state's economic growth.

Under Derek's leadership, BIPEC produces one of the most respected legislative scorecards in Mississippi politics. Its annual ratings of legislators' voting records on pro-business issues are highly regarded, and the

designation of “BIPEC Recommended” has become a sought-after distinction for candidates seeking to demonstrate their support for business-friendly policies.

Derek also oversees BIPEC’s political action arm, the Improve Mississippi Political Action Committee (IMPAC), which is actively involved in fundraising, candidate recruitment, campaign consulting, and research. IMPAC supports candidates for Statewide Office, the Legislature, and the Mississippi appellate courts.

Before taking the helm at BIPEC in 2016, Derek served as Governmental Affairs Director for the Mississippi Association of Realtors and as Director of Environmental and Taxation Affairs at the Mississippi Manufacturers Association. His career reflects a deep commitment to advancing policies that support economic development and a strong business climate in Mississippi.

Drew Maddox

Principal

Cornerstone Government Affairs

Drew Maddox joined the Cornerstone Mississippi team in February 2020 with more than 10 years of experience in finance and education policy. Previously, Drew served as the chief financial officer of the Mississippi Department of Revenue, where he oversaw all administrative divisions of the department, including accounting, communications, processing, information technologies and logistics. As CFO, Drew also worked closely with state legislators and statewide elected officials to guide tax policy decisions, liquor laws, and revenue-generating activities.

Prior to his time at the Department of Revenue, Drew also worked as director of state engagement at EdBuild, where he used his knowledge of political and governmental structures to strategically place educational reform proposals in the best positions for success in state legislatures across the country. Drew has also worked at the Mississippi Legislative Budget Office as the Senate budget officer, where he worked closely with leadership to craft and pass balanced budgets.

Drew received his Bachelor of Arts in English literature and his Bachelor of Business Administration degrees from Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi. Drew enjoys spending time with his wife and two children (Sam and Bee), baseball, and gardening.

John McKay

President and CEO

Mississippi Manufacturers Association

John McKay is the President and CEO of the Mississippi Manufacturers Association (MMA), the largest and most influential voice for Mississippi manufacturers and related businesses across the state. Over more than a decade with MMA, John has led the fight to reduce or eliminate burdensome taxes and regulations, develop and pass sweeping workforce development initiatives, support increased funding for critical infrastructure, and advocate for economic development incentives to grow jobs in our state.

John is also actively involved in numerous professional associations and related organizations. Appointed by Governor Tate Reeves, John serves Vice Chairman of the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB). He also serves on the Board of Directors of the Business & Industry Political Education Committee (BIPEC), the Nature Conservancy Mississippi Chapter, and the Haley Barbour Center for Manufacturing Excellence at The University of Mississippi. John is a member of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), and the Council of State Manufacturing Associations (COSMA).

John holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Mississippi with a double major in Political Science and English, and he has a Master of Public Administration degree from the College of Charleston. John is also a graduate of the University of Oklahoma's Economic Development Institute in Norman, Oklahoma.

Wendy Powell

Executive Director

Mississippi Association of Self-Insurers

Since August 2020, Wendy Powell has served as the Executive Director of the Mississippi Association of Self Insurers – her first venture into the world of association management. Prior to coming to MASI, Wendy was the Director of Marketing for a medical malpractice insurance company in Mississippi. She has over 30 years of experience in marketing and communications, including governmental affairs, business development, and special events management.

Wendy serves as President of the Board of Directors for Kids' Chance of Mississippi and is a member of the Mississippi Workers' Compensation Advisory Council. She was the recipient of the 2024 Sam Cox Spirit Award, given in recognition in service to the Mississippi workers' compensation industry. She also sits on the Board of Directors for the Mississippi Society of Association Executives.

Wendy is a member of the Public Relations Association of Mississippi and the Southern Public Relations Federation. In addition, she holds a Mississippi P&C Insurance License.

Despite being a graduate of Mississippi State University, she has converted for the next four years to follow the Ole Miss Rebels while watching her freshman son play in the Pride of the South band.

Michael Todaro, PharmD

Chief Operating Officer

Magnolia Health

Dr. Michael Todaro currently serves as Chief Operating Officer at Magnolia Health, the Centene Health plan in Jackson, Mississippi. His responsibilities are to plan and direct all aspects of the Business Unit's operations and maintain oversight for the short- and long-term profitability and growth of the health plan across all lines of business. Additional responsibilities include product development related to health and wellness ensuring alignment with company goals and strategy, the development of new product innovations and initiatives including defining data elements for reporting, system requirements, identifying educational materials,

operations and workflow, and development of health product descriptions. He works to facilitate operational oversight for product and program functions, identifying opportunities for improving care, quality, efficiency, and cost reduction. Dr. Todaro strives to ensure compliance with the contractual guidelines of the corporation and health plans impacted by numerous regulatory agencies with complex and often conflicting requirements. He also participates in internal and external accreditation initiatives, relevant boards, task forces, committees, meetings, and other activities.

Prior to joining Magnolia Health, Mike served as Administrator of Clinical Support Services, Director of Pharmacy and Clinical Assistant Professor at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson, Mississippi. In this role, Mike provided leadership, direction, and management for the Department of Pharmacy services, Radiation Oncology services, Department of Bone Marrow Transplant, Cancer Institute infusion services as well as Outpatient infusion therapy centers. He had oversight of the management of financial and quality standards affecting improvement plans and initiatives. Monitoring clinical and operational effectiveness, Mike worked with the management team and medical center leadership to attain quality goals and objectives while establishing and implementing short- and long-range organization goals, strategic plans, policies and operating procedures implementing changes as necessary.

Mike is a graduate of the University of Mississippi, where he attended pharmacy school and obtained his Doctorate of Pharmacy in 1999.

Scott Waller

President and CEO

Mississippi Economic Council

Scott Waller, President and CEO of the Mississippi Economic Council – the State Chamber of Commerce, is pivotal in providing background and support for major legislative initiatives on behalf of MEC members throughout the state. MEC has galvanized the business community through numerous initiatives, including successful legislation changing Mississippi's state flag and expanding career pathways for Mississippians.

The National Association of State Chambers named MEC as the State Chamber of the Year in 2022, making it the nation's top state chamber. In 2025, MEC received the Accredited State Chamber distinction from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, making it one of only seven Accredited State Chambers in the nation.

Scott serves on various state and national boards focusing on transportation infrastructure, workforce development, education, and economic growth. He was named one of Mississippi's 50 Most Influential leaders in Mississippi in 2019, 2020, 2022 and 2025.

He and his wife, Kim, live in Gluckstadt and are founding members of Wellspring Church. They have a son, Shane, who lives in Washington D.C.