

Mississippi Leaders Choose Secrecy and Iron Fisted Control

The Sun Herald [ran a report](#) by Donna Harris on January 29, 2013 entitled “Mississippi gets low grades for transparency on state and local websites.”

Mississippi ranked in the bottom five states in the nation in a report released Tuesday by a nonprofit organization dedicated to state and local government transparency.

Sunshine Review, based in Arlington, Va., released their 2013 Transparency Report Card, which graded every state and the largest counties, cities and school districts within each state on the availability of information on government websites...

"Transparency empowers citizens," said Michael Barnhart, president of Sunshine Review. "Citizens are entitled to crucial information on how the public business is conducted and how public money is spent. Without this information, voters cannot hold government accountable. Without transparency accountability is impossible." ...

"Transparency promotes accountability and studies show it discourages corruption and misuse of funds," she [Jeannie Atkins, executive director of the Mississippi Center for Freedom of Information] said. "In this particular study by the Sunlight Review comparing government websites providing access to information, Mississippi lags far behind other states and shows there is room for much improvement in making information available."

Governmental secrecy does not serve the best interests of the Mississippi public. For example, currently the search, much delayed by the way, for a president of USM is controlled with an iron fist and secrecy by IHL until it identifies a [“preferred candidate.”](#)

Then the IHL decides whether to accept the “preferred candidate” it has selected. The IHL selection process has served USM, its students and faculty, and Mississippi taxpayers very poorly. Its “selection process” has produced failure after failure -- with most presidents departing under a cloud of suspicion and/or claims of misconduct. [Martha Saunders](#) is not an exception. The IHL chooses

control and secrecy when it needs open vetting of candidates and vigorous debate in public by all Mississippians.