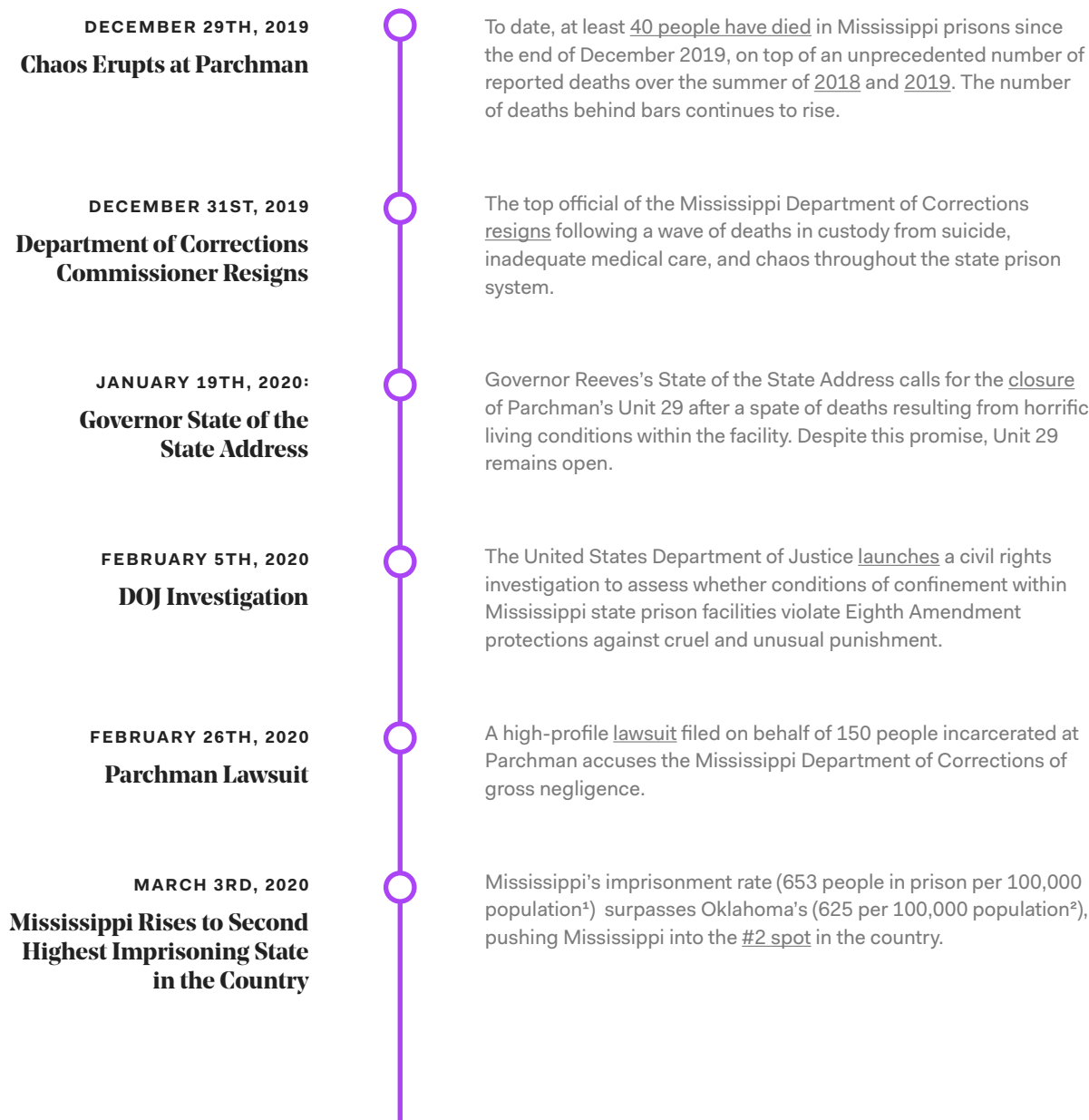


# Mississippi's Prison Crisis from Parchman to COVID-19

## A TIMELINE OF TRAGEDY WITHOUT ACTION

The Mississippi Department of Corrections has historically grappled with severe conditions of confinement failures further flamed by [staffing shortages](#), yearly [budget cuts](#), and a large and rising prison population -- all of which have left the Department incapable of safely housing the over 18,000 people within its custody. Recently, an unprecedented spate of deaths followed by a series of lawsuits, central leadership turnover, and now the COVID-19 crisis demand action from the governor to immediately reduce the state's dangerously high prison population and ensure the health and safety of the people incarcerated in Mississippi prisons. The timeline below details the dramatic and escalating series of events that has gripped MDOC and the people in its custody in the last six months alone. However, the governor and department leaders have done little to address these crises at a time when decisive action is desperately needed.



**MARCH 13TH, 2020**  
**CDC Issues Social Distancing  
 Guidance**

The Center for Disease Control and Johns Hopkins University release [guidance](#) for social distancing and additional recommendations to curtail the spread of the coronavirus outbreak. Mississippi prisons, where basic medical care and hygiene practices were already not being met and most people live in open dorm-style settings, remain noncompliant with the public health guidance.

**MARCH 24TH, 2020**  
**COVID-19 Infection Rate  
 Surges Across State**

Increased testing reveals a [swell in new cases](#) across the state. To date, Mississippi has over [10,000 confirmed cases](#) of COVID-19, and 480 deaths with ongoing reports of new cases.

**APRIL 13TH, 2020**  
**COVID-19 in State Prisons**

MDOC reports the first COVID-related death within the state prison system. MDOC has reported confirmed cases of COVID-19 including one incarcerated man who tested positive for COVID-19 after his death and an additional [four positive cases among Department staff](#). However, [only 47 incarcerated people have been tested](#) at this point.

**APRIL 22ND, 2020**  
**Model Projects Almost  
 All Incarcerated  
 Mississippians Will Contract  
 Virus Without Action**

FWD.us [releases a report](#) estimating the impact of COVID-19 on Mississippi's incarcerated population. This new model finds that without action nearly everyone in MDOC custody will contract COVID-19 and 186 people will die from the virus.

**MAY 5TH, 2020**  
**More Incarcerated  
 Mississippians Die**

More people [continue to die of illness](#) in state prisons but the Department has not confirmed whether or not the deaths are related to COVID-19.

**MAY 13TH, 2020**  
**Researchers Identify  
 Mississippi As One of Most  
 Vulnerable States to the  
 Pandemic**

The Surgo Foundation's "[COVID-19 Vulnerability Index](#)" ranks Mississippi as one of the top five most vulnerable states to the pandemic. Factors of vulnerability include the state's limited healthcare resources, high rates of preexisting medical conditions, and widespread financial insecurity among residents.

**MAY 15TH, 2020**  
**Coronavirus Cases in Prisons  
 Rise, MDOC Faces Second  
 Lawsuit**

In response to the rising number of confirmed cases in state prisons, the [Mississippi Center for Justice](#) [sues](#) MDOC for failure to implement COVID-19 precautions. To date, [15 incarcerated people](#) and [8 MDOC employees](#) have tested positive for the virus.

Calculated using the [Mississippi Department of Corrections Monthly Fact Sheet](#) as of February 3, 2020, including the custody population plus "other custody," "at large custody" and "hospital/medical" groups and the U.S. Census Bureau [estimate of Mississippi's 2019 population](#). This excludes individuals on house arrest or ISP.

Calculated using the [Oklahoma Department of Corrections Weekly Count](#) total inside custody population on February 3, 2020 and the U.S. Census Bureau estimate of Oklahoma's 2019 population. This excludes the county jail back-up and individuals housed outside of facilities or on GPS.