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**Blessing of the Cranes Event Celebrates the Beginning of a
New Era for the Port of Gulfport's Operations**

GULFPORT, Miss. – The MSPA Board of Commissioners along with Gov. Phil Bryant and local officials marked the beginning of a new era today at the Port of Gulfport with the "Blessing of the Cranes" event. The arrival of the cranes was a momentous milestone in the Port's Restoration Project and the blessing celebrates the progress made on the West Pier and the individuals and organizations who have contributed to its overall success.

The three gantry cranes, which arrived in Gulfport this past March, were welcomed with much excitement and fanfare. At a total cost of \$30 million, these cranes are a significant investment in the Port's infrastructure and will enable the Port's existing and future tenants to more efficiently service their vessels.

"The addition of the gantry cranes represent an important milestone toward the completion of the restoration project at the Port of Gulfport," Gov. Phil Bryant said. "The cranes will benefit the port's tenants for years to come and help attract new businesses and generate new investment."

"The investment in these cranes strengthens the Port of Gulfport's position as a strategic economic development asset for the Mississippi Gulf Coast and the entire state," said Mississippi Development Authority Executive Director Glenn McCullough, Jr. "We salute Jonathan Daniels and his team for their leadership ensuring that the Port of Gulfport is the strategic 'Port of the Future.'"

"The arrival and commissioning of the cranes showcases the importance of public and private partnerships and how they are critical to the successful modernization of the Port of Gulfport," said Jonathan Daniels, executive director and CEO. "This investment in our operations will not only facilitate continued growth for the Port, but also insure our I.L.A. Local #1303 has some of the best tools to service our customers."

As the Port further diversifies its tenant base, the cranes will not only be able to accommodate the Port's container customers but also handle bulk and break-bulk cargo providing more opportunities for longshoremen hours.

“The I.L.A. Local #1303 has been in existence since 1933 and a safety first mentality and strong work ethic has been passed down to the Longshoremen of today,” said ILA Local 1303 president, Darius Johnson. “In my 22 years of working at the Port, I have never seen the level of excitement our members had when the gantry cranes arrived and our Longshoremen are looking forward to having a prosperous future at the Port of Gulfport.”

The state-of-the-art cranes will be electrically powered by the local utility company, Mississippi Power, and will replace the current mobile harbor cranes. The new cranes have a lifting capacity of roughly 65 tons and should begin unloading cargo towards the end of June.

The Port of Gulfport is committed to providing world-class maritime terminal service to its customers and facilitating economic growth and good jobs for the people of Mississippi through the promotion of domestic and international trade.

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