

By: Representative Weathersby

To: Juvenile Justice;
Education

HOUSE BILL NO. 355
(As Sent to Governor)

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 43-27-203, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,
2 TO AUTHORIZE THE MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL GUARD TO AWARD ADULT HIGH
3 SCHOOL DIPLOMAS TO YOUTH CHALLENGE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS WHO MEET
4 MINIMUM ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION; AND FOR RELATED
5 PURPOSES.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

7 SECTION 1. Section 43-27-203, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
8 amended as follows:

9 43-27-203. (1) There is created under the Mississippi
10 National Guard a program to be known as the "Youth Challenge
11 Program." The program shall be an interdiction program designed
12 for children determined to be "at risk" by the National Guard.

13 (2) The Mississippi National Guard shall implement and
14 administer the Youth Challenge Program and shall promulgate rules
15 and regulations concerning the administration of the
16 program * * *. The National Guard shall prepare written
17 guidelines concerning the nomination and selection process of
18 participants in the program, and such guidelines shall include a
19 list of the factors considered in the selection process.

20 (3) Participation in the Youth Challenge Program shall be on
21 a voluntary basis. No child may be sentenced by any court to
22 participate in the program; however, a youth court judge may refer
23 the program to a child when, under his determination, such program
24 would be sufficient to meet the needs of the child.

25 (4) The Mississippi National Guard, under the auspices of
26 the Challenge Academy, may award an adult high school diploma to
27 each participant who meets the requirements for a general

28 educational development (GED) equivalent under the policies and
29 guidelines of the GED Testing Service of the American Council on
30 Education and any other minimum academic requirements prescribed
31 by the National Guard and Challenge Academy for graduation from
32 the Youth Challenge Program. Participants in the program who do
33 not meet the minimum academic requirements may be awarded a
34 special certificate of attendance. The Mississippi National Guard
35 and the Challenge Academy shall establish rules and regulations
36 for awarding the adult high school diploma and shall prescribe the
37 form for such diploma and the certificate of attendance.

38 (5) The Mississippi National Guard may accept any available
39 funds that may be used to defray the expenses of the program,
40 including, but not limited to, federal funding, public or private
41 funds and any funds that may be appropriated by the Legislature
42 for that purpose.

43 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from
44 and after July 1, 1999.