

By: Representative Ryan

To: Conservation and  
Water Resources

HOUSE BILL NO. 877

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 7-7-211, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO  
2 AUTHORIZE THE STATE AUDITOR TO AUDIT THE DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS  
3 FROM THE PUBLIC TRUST TIDELANDS FUND; TO AMEND SECTION 29-15-9,  
4 MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, IN CONFORMITY THERETO; AND FOR RELATED  
5 PURPOSES.

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

7 SECTION 1. Section 7-7-211, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
8 amended as follows:

9 7-7-211. The department shall have the power and it shall be  
10 its duty:

11 (a) To identify and define for all public offices of  
12 the state and its subdivisions generally accepted accounting  
13 principles as promulgated by nationally recognized professional  
14 organizations and to consult with the State Fiscal Officer in the  
15 prescription and implementation of accounting rules and  
16 regulations;

17 (b) To prescribe, for all public offices of regional  
18 and local subdivisions of the state, systems of accounting,  
19 budgeting and reporting financial facts relating to said offices  
20 in conformity with legal requirements and with generally accepted  
21 accounting principles as promulgated by nationally recognized  
22 professional organizations; to assist such subdivisions in need of  
23 assistance in the installation of such systems; to revise such  
24 systems when deemed necessary, and to report to the Legislature at  
25 periodic times the extent to which each office is maintaining such  
26 systems, along with such recommendations to the Legislature for  
27 improvement as seem desirable;

28           (c) To study and analyze existing managerial policies,  
29 methods, procedures, duties and services of the various state  
30 departments and institutions upon written request of the Governor,  
31 the Legislature or any committee or other body empowered by the  
32 Legislature to make such request to determine whether and where  
33 operations can be eliminated, combined, simplified and improved;

34           (d) To postaudit each year and, when deemed necessary,  
35 preaudit and investigate the financial affairs of the departments,  
36 institutions, boards, commissions or other agencies of state  
37 government, as part of the publication of a comprehensive annual  
38 financial report for the State of Mississippi. In complying with  
39 the requirements of this subsection, the department shall have the  
40 authority to conduct all necessary audit procedures on an interim  
41 and year-end basis;

42           (e) To postaudit and, when deemed necessary, preaudit  
43 and investigate separately the financial affairs of (i) the  
44 offices, boards and commissions of county governments and any  
45 departments and institutions thereof and therein; (ii) public  
46 school districts, departments of education and junior college  
47 districts; and (iii) any other local offices or agencies which  
48 share revenues derived from taxes or fees imposed by the state  
49 Legislature or receive grants from revenues collected by  
50 governmental divisions of the state; the cost of such audits,  
51 investigations or other services to be paid as follows: Such part  
52 shall be paid by the state from appropriations made by the  
53 Legislature for the operation of the State Department of Audit as  
54 may exceed the sum of One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) per day for  
55 the services of each staff person engaged in performing the audit  
56 or other service, which sum shall be paid by the county, district,  
57 department, institution or other agency audited out of its general  
58 fund or any other available funds from which such payment is not  
59 prohibited by law;

60           (f) To postaudit and, when deemed necessary, preaudit

61 and investigate the financial affairs of the levee boards;  
62 agencies created by the Legislature or by executive order of the  
63 Governor; profit or nonprofit business entities administering  
64 programs financed by funds flowing through the State Treasury or  
65 through any of the agencies of the state, or its subdivisions; and  
66 all other public bodies supported by funds derived in part or  
67 wholly from public funds, except municipalities which annually  
68 submit an audit prepared by a qualified certified public  
69 accountant using methods and procedures prescribed by the  
70 department;

71 (g) To make written demand, when necessary, for the  
72 recovery of any amounts representing public funds improperly  
73 withheld, misappropriated and/or otherwise illegally expended by  
74 an officer, employee or administrative body of any state, county  
75 or other public office, and/or for the recovery of the value of  
76 any public property disposed of in an unlawful manner by a public  
77 officer, employee or administrative body, such demands to be made  
78 (i) upon the person or persons liable for such amounts and upon  
79 the surety on official bond thereof, and/or (ii) upon any  
80 individual, partnership, corporation or association to whom the  
81 illegal expenditure was made or with whom the unlawful disposition  
82 of public property was made, if such individual, partnership,  
83 corporation or association knew or had reason to know through the  
84 exercising of reasonable diligence that the expenditure was  
85 illegal or the disposition unlawful. Such demand shall be  
86 premised on competent evidence, which shall include at least one  
87 (1) of the following: (i) sworn statements, (ii) written  
88 documentation, (iii) physical evidence, or (iv) reports and  
89 findings of government or other law enforcement agencies. Other  
90 provisions notwithstanding, a demand letter issued pursuant to  
91 this subsection shall remain confidential by the State Auditor  
92 until the individual against whom the demand letter is being filed  
93 has been served with a copy of such demand letter. If, however,

94 such individual cannot be notified within fifteen (15) days using  
95 reasonable means and due diligence, such notification shall be  
96 made to the individual's bonding company, if he or she is bonded.  
97 Each such demand shall be paid into the proper treasury of the  
98 state, county or other public body through the office of the  
99 department in the amount demanded within thirty (30) days from the  
100 date thereof, together with interest thereon in the sum of one  
101 percent (1%) per month from the date such amount or amounts were  
102 improperly withheld, misappropriated and/or otherwise illegally  
103 expended. In the event, however, such person or persons shall  
104 refuse, neglect or otherwise fail to pay the amount demanded and  
105 the interest due thereon within the allotted thirty (30) days, the  
106 State Auditor shall have the authority and it shall be his duty to  
107 institute suit, and the Attorney General shall prosecute the same  
108 in any court of the state to the end that there shall be recovered  
109 the total of such amounts from the person or persons and surety on  
110 official bond named therein; and the amounts so recovered shall be  
111 paid into the proper treasury of the state, county or other public  
112 body through the State Auditor;

113           (h) To investigate any alleged or suspected violation  
114 of the laws of the state by any officer or employee of the state,  
115 county or other public office in the purchase, sale or the use of  
116 any supplies, services, equipment or other property belonging  
117 thereto; and in such investigation to do any and all things  
118 necessary to procure evidence sufficient either to prove or  
119 disprove the existence of such alleged or suspected violations.  
120 The Department of Investigation of the State Department of Audit  
121 may investigate, for the purpose of prosecution, any suspected  
122 criminal violation of the provisions of this chapter. For the  
123 purpose of administration and enforcement of this chapter, the  
124 enforcement employees of the Department of Investigation of the  
125 State Department of Audit have the powers of a peace officer of  
126 this state only over those persons under indictment or at the

127 direction of another duly authorized law enforcement agency having  
128 jurisdiction over the case. All enforcement employees of the  
129 Department of Investigation of the State Department of Audit hired  
130 on or after July 1, 1993, shall be required to complete the Law  
131 Enforcement Officers Training Program and shall meet the standards  
132 of the program;

133 (i) To issue subpoenas, with the approval of, and  
134 returnable to, a judge of a chancery or circuit court, in termtime  
135 or in vacation, to examine the records, documents or other  
136 evidence of persons, firms, corporations or any other entities  
137 insofar as such records, documents or other evidence relate to  
138 dealings with any state, county or other public entity. The  
139 circuit or chancery judge must serve the county in which the  
140 records, documents or other evidence is located; or where all or  
141 part of the transaction or transactions occurred which are the  
142 subject of the subpoena;

143 (j) In any instances in which the State Auditor is or  
144 shall be authorized or required to examine or audit, whether  
145 preaudit or postaudit, any books, ledgers, accounts or other  
146 records of the affairs of any public hospital owned or owned and  
147 operated by one or more political subdivisions or parts thereof or  
148 any combination thereof, or any school district, including  
149 activity funds thereof, it shall be sufficient compliance  
150 therewith, in the discretion of the State Auditor, that such  
151 examination or audit be made from the report of any audit or other  
152 examination certified by a certified public accountant and  
153 prepared by or under the supervision of such certified public  
154 accountant. Such audits shall be made in accordance with  
155 generally accepted standards of auditing, with the use of an audit  
156 program prepared by the State Auditor, and final reports of such  
157 audits shall conform to the format prescribed by the State  
158 Auditor. All files, working papers, notes, correspondence and all  
159 other data compiled during the course of the audit shall be

160 available, without cost, to the State Auditor for examination and  
161 abstracting during the normal business hours of any business day.  
162 The expense of such certified reports shall be borne by the  
163 respective hospital, or any available school district funds other  
164 than minimum program funds, subject to examination or audit. The  
165 State Auditor shall not be bound by such certified reports and  
166 may, in his or their discretion, conduct such examination or audit  
167 from the books, ledgers, accounts or other records involved as may  
168 be appropriate and authorized by law;

169 (k) The State Auditor shall have the authority to  
170 contract with qualified public accounting firms to perform  
171 selected audits required in subsections (d), (e) and (f) of this  
172 section, if funds are made available for such contracts by the  
173 Legislature, or if funds are available from the governmental  
174 entity covered by subsections (d), (e) and (f). Such audits shall  
175 be made in accordance with generally accepted standards of  
176 auditing, with the use of an audit program prepared by the State  
177 Auditor, and final reports of such audits shall conform to the  
178 format prescribed by the State Auditor. All files, working  
179 papers, notes, correspondence and all other data compiled during  
180 the course of the audit shall be available, without cost, to the  
181 State Auditor for examination and abstracting during the normal  
182 business hours of any business day;

183 (l) The State Auditor shall have the authority to  
184 establish training courses and programs for the personnel of the  
185 various state and local governmental entities under the  
186 jurisdiction of the office of the State Auditor. The training  
187 courses and programs shall include, but not be limited to, topics  
188 on internal control of funds, property and equipment control and  
189 inventory, governmental accounting and financial reporting, and  
190 internal auditing. The State Auditor is authorized to charge a  
191 fee from the participants of these courses and programs, which fee  
192 shall be deposited into the Department of Audit Special Fund.

193 State and local governmental entities are authorized to pay such  
194 fee and any travel expenses out of their general funds or any  
195 other available funds from which such payment is not prohibited by  
196 law;

197 (m) Upon written request by the Governor or any member  
198 of the state Legislature, the State Auditor may audit any state  
199 funds and/or state and federal funds received by any nonprofit  
200 corporation incorporated under the laws of this state;

201 (n) To conduct performance audits of personal or  
202 professional service contracts by state agencies on a random  
203 sampling basis, or upon request of the State Personal Service  
204 Contract Review Board under Section 25-9-120(3);

205 (o) Upon written request by the Governor or any member  
206 of the State Legislature, or in his discretion, the State Auditor  
207 may audit any funds disbursed from the Public Trust Tidelands Fund  
208 and received by any local governing or taxing authority, or by any  
209 organization or entity.

210 SECTION 2. Section 29-15-9, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
211 amended as follows:

212 29-15-9. There is hereby created in the State Treasury a  
213 special fund to be known as the "Public Trust Tidelands Fund."  
214 The fund shall be administered by the Secretary of State as  
215 trustee.

216 Any funds derived from lease rentals of tidelands and  
217 submerged lands, except those funds derived from mineral leases,  
218 or funds heretofore specifically designated to be applied to other  
219 agencies, shall be transferred to the special fund. However,  
220 funds derived from lease rentals may be used to cover the  
221 administrative cost incurred by the Secretary of State. Any  
222 remaining funds derived from lease rentals shall be disbursed pro  
223 rata to the local taxing authorities for the replacement of lost  
224 ad valorem taxes, if any. Then, any remaining funds shall be  
225 disbursed to the commission for new and extra programs of

226 tidelands management, such as conservation, reclamation,  
227 preservation, acquisition, education or the enhancement of public  
228 access to the public trust tidelands or public improvement  
229 projects as they relate to such lands. Any funds disbursed from  
230 the Public Trust Tidelands Fund under the provisions of this  
231 section may be subject to an audit by the State Auditor, in the  
232 discretion of the Auditor or upon the written request of the  
233 Governor or any member of the State Legislature.

234 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect and be in force from  
235 and after July 1, 1999.