

By: Senator(s) Harden

To: Education;
Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2691

1 AN ACT TO CODIFY SECTION 37-143-12, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,
2 TO PROVIDE A SCHOOL DISTRICT TEACHER-SCHOLAR GRANT PROGRAM TO
3 PROVIDE INCENTIVE SCHOLARSHIPS TO QUALIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
4 EMPLOYEES TO TAKE COLLEGE COURSEWORK LEADING TO TEACHER
5 CERTIFICATION IF THE PERSON AGREES TO TEACH IN MISSISSIPPI TO
6 PLACE CONDITIONS ON SUCH SCHOLARSHIPS AND PROVIDE FOR CONVERSION
7 INTO LOANS IF THE GRANTEE DOES NOT MEET SUCH CONDITIONS; AND FOR
8 RELATED PURPOSES.

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

10 SECTION 1. The following provision shall be codified as
11 Section 37-143-12, Mississippi Code of 1972:

12 37-143-12. (1) The Legislature finds that there continues
13 to exist a critical shortage of teachers in many areas and
14 communities of Mississippi. It is hereby declared to be the
15 intention of the Legislature to attract the highest calibre
16 students into the teaching profession and to retain qualified
17 school district employees by awarding incentive grants to persons
18 declaring an intention to serve in the teaching field and who
19 actually render service to the state while possessing a regular
20 teaching certificate with an appropriate major or subject area of
21 concentration.

22 (2) There is hereby established the "School District
23 Employee Teacher-Scholar Grant Fund."

24 (3) To the extent of appropriations available, residents of
25 the State of Mississippi who are presently employed by a public
26 school district and have graduated from an accredited program of
27 secondary education and who have expressed in writing a present
28 intention to teach in (a) a critical teacher shortage area or
29 subject area of concentration, or (b) a critical teacher shortage

30 geographic area section of the state, shall be eligible for a
31 grant under this program to be applied to the costs of their
32 college education.

33 (4) A freshman establishing initial eligibility shall be
34 eligible for a maximum of four (4) annual grants. Upper-class
35 students shall be eligible for grants for each remaining year of
36 study. To maintain eligibility, a student shall be enrolled in at
37 least six (6) credit hours per semester.

38 (5) The annual grant shall be Fifteen Thousand Dollars
39 (\$15,000.00).

40 (6) The repayment of the grants to persons is conditioned
41 upon the grantees actually rendering service as certified teachers
42 in (a) a critical teacher shortage area or subject area of
43 concentration, or (b) a critical teacher shortage geographic area
44 section of the state, as approved by the State Board of Education
45 in Mississippi designated by the State Board of Education. For
46 each year of full-time teaching, as defined for these purposes by
47 the State Board of Education, repayment of twenty-five percent
48 (25%) of the total amounts of grants shall be forgiven.

49 (7) The State Board of Education shall promulgate guidelines
50 under which local superintendents of schools shall allow persons
51 accepted into the grant program to continue their employment
52 responsibilities with the school district under flexible working
53 hours, which, to the extent practicable, shall also enable the
54 person to attend college classes.

55 (8) In the event that the grantee fails to perform the
56 conditions provided herein, then the grant shall be converted to a
57 loan and the grantee shall be responsible for repayment of the
58 grant. Persons failing to complete an appropriate program of
59 study shall immediately become liable to the Board of Trustees of
60 State Institutions of Higher Learning for the sum of all
61 outstanding loans, except in the case of a deferral of debt for
62 cause by the board, after which period of deferral, study may be
63 resumed. Persons failing to meet teaching requirements in any
64 required semester shall immediately be in breach of contract and
65 become liable to the board for the amount of the corresponding
66 loan received, with interest accruing at the current Stafford Loan

67 rate at the time the breach occurs, except in the case of a
68 deferral of debt for cause by the board, after which period of
69 deferral teaching duties required hereunder will be resumed. If
70 the claim for payment of such loan is placed in the hands of an
71 attorney of collection after default, then the obligor shall be
72 liable for an additional amount equal to a reasonable attorney's
73 fee.

74 (9) A grant or loan made pursuant to this section shall not
75 be voidable by reason of the age of the borrower at the time of
76 receiving a loan.

77 (10) Failure to pay any loan and interest that becomes due
78 shall be cause for the revocation of a person's teaching
79 certificate by the State Department of Education.

80 (11) All monies repaid to the Board of Trustees of State
81 Institutions of Higher Learning hereunder shall be added to the
82 appropriations made for the purposes of this section, and said
83 appropriations shall not lapse.

84 (12) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher
85 Learning with the concurrence of the State Board of Education
86 shall jointly promulgate regulations necessary for the proper
87 administration of this section.

88 (13) If insufficient funds are available for the requested
89 grants to a qualified student during any fiscal year, the Board of
90 Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning shall make pro
91 rata reductions in the grants made to qualifying applicants.
92 Priority consideration shall be given to persons receiving
93 previous grants and participating in the program.

94 (14) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher
95 Learning shall make an annual report to the Legislature. Each
96 said report shall contain a complete enumeration of the board's
97 activities, grants or scholarships granted, names of persons to
98 whom granted and the institutions attended by those receiving the
99 same, the teaching location of applicants who have received their

100 education and become certified teachers within this state as a
101 result of said grants and/or scholarships. The board shall make a
102 full report and account of receipts and expenditures for salaries
103 and expenses incurred under the provisions of this section. The
104 board shall, upon its records and any published report,
105 distinguish between those recipients who have breached their
106 contracts but with the board's permission who have paid their
107 financial obligations in full, and those recipients who have
108 breached their contracts and remain financially indebted to the
109 state.

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