

By: Senator(s) Hewes

To: Ports and Marine  
Resources

SENATE BILL NO. 2804

1 AN ACT TO TRANSFER THE DUTIES, POWERS, PERSONNEL AND  
2 RESOURCES OF THE MARINE LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION OF THE DEPARTMENT  
3 OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES AND PARKS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MARINE  
4 RESOURCES; TO AMEND SECTIONS 49-4-7, 49-15-3, 49-15-11, 49-15-21,  
5 49-15-301 AND 63-11-19, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO CONFORM; TO  
6 FURTHER AMEND SECTION 49-15-21, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO  
7 CLARIFY THE POLICE POWERS OF THE MARINE LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS;  
8 AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

10 SECTION 1. Section 49-15-3, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
11 amended as follows:

12 49-15-3. As used in this chapter, the term:

13 (a) "Commission" means the Mississippi Commission on  
14 Marine Resources.

15 (b) "Department" means the Department of Marine  
16 Resources.

17 (c) "Domicile" means a person's principal or primary  
18 place of abode in which a person's habitation is fixed and to  
19 which the person, whenever absent, has the present intention of  
20 returning after a departure of absence therefrom, regardless of  
21 the duration of the absence. The burden of proving domicile in  
22 the State of Mississippi shall be on the person claiming that  
23 status. A person holding a current driver's license shall be  
24 deemed to be domiciled within the state issuing the license. If a  
25 person does not hold a current driver's license the following  
26 evidence may be considered in establishing, but is not necessarily  
27 determinative of domicile: residence for income or other tax  
28 purposes, homestead exemption receipt or other means prescribed by  
29 the commission. In the case of minors, domicile of the parents

30 shall be used as evidence of the minor's domicile.

31 (d) "Game fish" means cobia, also known as ling or  
32 lemonfish (rachycentron canadum). The cobia is classified as game  
33 fish.

34 (e) "Illegal oysters" means:

35 (i) All untagged shell stock;

36 (ii) Shell oysters obtained from uncertified shops  
37 or dealers or from an unlicensed catcher;

38 (iii) Oysters obtained from waters not declared  
39 safe and sanitary by the department, except those oysters caught  
40 by the commission for re-laying or under private leases pursuant  
41 to Section 49-15-27;

42 (iv) Shucked oysters obtained from uncertified  
43 shops or repackers.

44 (f) "Inspector" means the chief inspector, the  
45 assistant chief inspector, \* \* \* deputy inspector, bureau director  
46 and certified enforcement officer employed by the  
47 department \* \* \*.

48 (g) "Natural reefs" means any bottom under the  
49 jurisdiction of the commission of one or more acres on which  
50 oysters grow naturally, or have grown naturally, in a quantity  
51 sufficient to warrant commercial fishing as a means of livelihood,  
52 or have been used in such a manner within a period of ten (10)  
53 years next preceding the time the bottoms may come up for  
54 determination by the commission.

55 (h) "Resident" means a person, firm or corporation that  
56 is domiciled in this state.

57 (i) "Seafood" means all oysters, saltwater fish,  
58 saltwater shrimp, diamondback terrapin, sea turtle, crabs and all  
59 other species of marine or saltwater animal life existing or  
60 living in the waters within the territorial jurisdiction of the  
61 State of Mississippi.

62 (j) "Tonging reefs" means any bottom under the  
63 jurisdiction of the commission designated by the commission as an  
64 area in which oysters may only be taken by use of hand tongs.

65 SECTION 2. Section 49-15-11, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
66 amended as follows:

67 49-15-11. (1) The Mississippi Department of Marine  
68 Resources is hereby established and full power is vested in the  
69 department to manage, control, supervise, enforce and direct any  
70 matters pertaining to saltwater aquatic life and marine resources  
71 under the jurisdiction of the commission. The Department of  
72 Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks shall transfer all powers, duties,  
73 employees, equipment, funds, buildings, facilities, inventory and  
74 resources of the \* \* \* marine \* \* \* law enforcement \* \* \* division  
75 to the Department of Marine Resources.

76 (2) The Executive Director of the Department of Marine  
77 Resources shall have the authority to internally reorganize the  
78 Department of Marine Resources with persons meeting established  
79 qualifications for comparable positions of duty and responsibility  
80 including, but not limited to, the deputy director, division  
81 chiefs, biologists and other personnel. All personnel actions  
82 initiated as a result of the transfer of law enforcement officers  
83 shall be subject to the State Personnel Board rules and  
84 procedures. The executive director shall implement a merit  
85 promotion system for all law enforcement officers. The merit  
86 promotion system shall be based on an individual's merit and  
87 length of service.

88 (3) Whenever the terms "Mississippi Marine Conservation  
89 Commission," "Marine Conservation Commission," "Bureau of Marine  
90 Resources" and "Mississippi Marine Resources Council" appear in  
91 any state law, they shall mean the "Mississippi Commission on  
92 Marine Resources."

93 SECTION 3. (1) The Department of Marine Resources and the  
94 Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks shall comply with  
95 Sections 5-11-1 through 5-11-5 in the transfer of the marine law  
96 enforcement division.

97 (2) The transfer of personnel shall be commensurate with the  
98 number and classification of positions (PINS) allocated to the  
99 Bureau of Marine Resources on January 1, 1999. The transfer shall

100 also include support, clerical, data processing, communications  
101 and boating safety pins and resources. All unexpended balances of  
102 appropriations, allocations or other funds related to marine law  
103 enforcement and support functions shall be transferred. The  
104 transfer of special funds shall be made in such a manner that the  
105 relation between law enforcement programs and revenue source is  
106 retained.

107 SECTION 4. Section 49-15-21, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
108 amended as follows:

109 49-15-21. (1) The executive director \* \* \* shall appoint  
110 the necessary enforcement officers for the administration of this  
111 chapter. The salary of all enforcement officers employed shall be  
112 as determined by the State Personnel Board. However, the members  
113 of the Enforcement Officers' Reserve Unit created in subsection  
114 (4) shall serve without pay, and shall not be employees of the  
115 State of Mississippi for purposes of the State Personnel System,  
116 the Workers' Compensation Law, the Public Employees' Retirement  
117 System or the State Employees' Life and Health Insurance Plan.

118 (2) All enforcement officers shall be experienced and  
119 qualified persons thoroughly familiar with the seafood business  
120 and shall be at least twenty-one (21) years of age and be a high  
121 school graduate or its equivalent. The enforcement officers  
122 shall diligently enforce all laws and regulations for the  
123 protection, propagation, preservation or conservation of all  
124 saltwater aquatic life of the State of Mississippi, and they are  
125 hereby constituted peace officers of the State of Mississippi,  
126 with full police power and jurisdiction to enforce all laws of  
127 the State of Mississippi and all regulations adopted and  
128 promulgated by the commission. Enforcement officers may  
129 exercise such powers in any county of the State of Mississippi  
130 and on any waters of the state, and they are hereby authorized  
131 to carry firearms or other weapons, concealed or otherwise, and  
132 they shall investigate all persons, corporations and otherwise

133 who are alleged to have violated any laws, and make affidavits,  
134 arrests and serve papers of any court of competent jurisdiction,  
135 in like manner as is provided for sheriffs and deputy sheriffs,  
136 when the same shall be in connection with the enforcement of the  
137 seafood laws of the State of Mississippi and such other laws and  
138 regulations of this state as the commission \* \* \* may designate.

139 The enforcement officers may seize at any time aquatic life  
140 caught, taken or transported in a manner contrary to the laws of  
141 this state, and may confiscate and dispose of the same. Any net  
142 or other paraphernalia used or employed in connection with a  
143 violation may be seized, and forfeiture proceedings may be  
144 instituted pursuant to Sections 49-7-251 through 49-7-257.

145 Enforcement officers may draft the aid of captains, crews and  
146 boats or licensed vessels to enforce this chapter and may,  
147 without warrant, board and search vessels or vehicles. The  
148 application for any license or permit from the commission to  
149 catch, fish, take, transport or handle or process any form of  
150 aquatic life, or the taking, catching, transporting or handling  
151 or processing of any and all aquatic life in this state shall  
152 constitute acquiescence and agreement upon the part of the  
153 owners, captains and crews, employers and dealers to the  
154 provisions of this chapter and the agreement that enforcement  
155 officers may exercise the authority granted under the provisions  
156 hereof.

157 (3) Prior to entering into performance of their duties or  
158 delegations or as soon after appointment as possible, each  
159 enforcement officer, at the expense of the commission \* \* \*, shall  
160 attend and complete an appropriate curriculum in the field of law  
161 enforcement at the Mississippi Law Enforcement Officers' Training  
162 Academy or other law enforcement training program approved under  
163 Section 45-6-7. However, members of the Enforcement Officers'  
164 Reserve Unit created in subsection (4) of this section may attend  
165 the Mississippi Law Enforcement Officers' Training Academy at the

166 expense of the commission \* \* \* if it deems the training necessary  
167 or desirable. No enforcement officer shall be entitled to payment  
168 of salary after the first six (6) months in office if he has  
169 either failed to attend the academy or has failed to comply with  
170 other qualifications or successfully complete any law enforcement  
171 qualification examinations as the director deems necessary. The  
172 enforcement officers shall, on a periodic basis, be required to  
173 attend additional advanced courses in law enforcement in order  
174 that they will be properly improved and trained in the modern,  
175 technical advances of law enforcement.

176 (4) (a) There is hereby created an Enforcement Officers'  
177 Reserve Unit, hereinafter termed "the reserve," to assist the  
178 enforcement officers in the performance of their duties under this  
179 chapter. The reserve shall consist of volunteers who are approved  
180 by the chief inspector or his designated representative, and the  
181 members of the reserve shall serve without pay. Reserve officers  
182 shall be in such numbers as determined by the enforcement needs,  
183 with the maximum strength of reserve officers limited to the same  
184 number as enforcement officers.

185 (b) To be eligible for membership in the reserve, an  
186 applicant must be twenty-one (21) years of age, be a high school  
187 graduate or its equivalent, be in good physical condition, have a  
188 Mississippi driver's license, be in good standing with the  
189 community, be available for training and duty, not be a member of  
190 any police, auxiliary police, civil defense, or private security  
191 agency, have never been convicted of a felony, and have one (1) of  
192 the following:

193 (i) An honorable discharge or honorable separation  
194 certificate from one (1) of the United States military services;

195 (ii) Three (3) years of responsible post-high  
196 school work experience that required the ability to deal  
197 effectively with individuals and groups of persons;

198 (iii) Successful completion of sixty (60) semester

199 hours at an accredited college or university; or

200 (iv) The qualifications as are outlined in this  
201 section for enforcement officers.

202 Members of the immediate family of enforcement officers shall  
203 not be eligible for the reserve unless a special waiver is  
204 granted.

205 Upon acceptance into the reserve, members shall receive a  
206 temporary appointment for one (1) year. During this year of  
207 temporary status, members must successfully complete the required  
208 training and must qualify on the same firearms course as  
209 enforcement officers.

210 (c) The reserve shall be under the leadership and  
211 direction of the assistant chief inspector, who may designate an  
212 enforcement officer to coordinate the actions of the reserve. The  
213 training of the reserve shall be conducted by an enforcement  
214 officer. The reserve shall meet at least once each month for the  
215 purpose of training and transacting any business as may come  
216 before it. The chief inspector shall be notified in writing of  
217 all meetings of the reserve and the time and place of the meetings  
218 shall be recorded with the chief inspector. The chief inspector  
219 shall prepare a reserve officer's manual with the advice and  
220 consent of the commission \* \* \*. The manual shall include, but is  
221 not limited to, the following: activities and operations,  
222 training, administration and duties. During active service, the  
223 reserve shall be under the direction of the chief inspector or his  
224 designated representative. When a reserve officer is on active  
225 duty and assigned to a specific enforcement officer, he shall be  
226 under the direct supervision of that officer. Reserve officers  
227 serve at the discretion of the chief inspector and may be  
228 dismissed by him or by a board of inquiry appointed by the  
229 commission \* \* \*. Reserve officers shall furnish their own  
230 uniforms and other personal equipment if the commission \* \* \* does  
231 not provide such items.

232 (d) The commission \* \* \* may, by regulation, require  
233 members of the Enforcement Officers' Reserve Unit to attend  
234 officer reserve training programs conducted by county or municipal  
235 agencies.

236 (e) The commission \* \* \* may issue uniforms to such  
237 reserve officers and may authorize the issuance of any state  
238 equipment necessary for the reserve officers to adequately assist  
239 law enforcement officers. The commission \* \* \* shall develop a  
240 reserve officer identification system to accomplish the issuance  
241 of such items in accordance with the State Auditor guidelines.

242 (f) If the commission \* \* \* determines that a member of  
243 the Enforcement Officers' Reserve Unit may attend a training  
244 program as authorized under this section, it shall require that  
245 reserve officer to sign an agreement, prior to attending a  
246 training program, which shall stipulate that if the reserve  
247 officer accepts employment from any other public or private law  
248 enforcement agency within three (3) years after completion of his  
249 training program, the reserve officer or the respective hiring law  
250 enforcement agency shall reimburse the department for the total  
251 cost of his training program. By October 1 of each year, the  
252 department \* \* \* shall provide the Game and Fish Committee of the  
253 Mississippi House of Representatives and the Ports and Marine  
254 Resources Committee of the Mississippi Senate a listing which  
255 contains each name and the respective cost of training each  
256 reserve officer received during the previous year.

257 SECTION 5. Section 49-15-301, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
258 amended as follows:

259 49-15-301. (1) The Mississippi Commission on Marine  
260 Resources is hereby established and full power is vested in the  
261 commission to regulate all matters pertaining to all saltwater  
262 aquatic life and marine resources. The commission shall  
263 administer the Coastal Wetlands Protection Law and the Public  
264 Trust Tidelands Act. The power and duties of the commission shall



265 be exercised through the Department of Marine Resources. \* \* \*

266 (2) The Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources shall  
267 consist of seven (7) members to be appointed as follows:

268 (a) The Governor shall appoint six (6) members who  
269 shall be residents of Jackson, Harrison and Hancock Counties with  
270 the advice and consent of the Senate. The Governor shall appoint  
271 two (2) members from each county. The members designated in  
272 subparagraphs (i), (ii), (iv) and (vi) must be a resident of the  
273 county where the business he is appointed to represent is located.

274 (b) The commission shall be composed as follows:

275 (i) One (1) member shall be a commercial seafood  
276 processor.

277 (ii) One (1) member shall be a commercial  
278 fisherman.

279 (iii) One (1) member shall be a recreational  
280 sports fisherman.

281 (iv) One (1) member shall be a charter boat  
282 operator.

283 (v) One (1) member shall be a member of an  
284 incorporated nonprofit environmental organization.

285 (vi) One (1) member shall be from the nonseafood  
286 industry.

287 (vii) The member of the Commission on Wildlife  
288 Fisheries and Parks from the Fifth Congressional District.

289 (c) Of the initial members appointed by the Governor,  
290 the members designated in subparagraphs (i),(ii) and (iii) shall  
291 serve for an initial term of two (2) years and one (1) member  
292 shall be appointed from each county. The members designated in  
293 subparagraphs (iv), (v) and (vi) shall serve an initial term of  
294 four (4) years and one (1) member shall be appointed from each  
295 county. All terms after the initial terms shall be for a period  
296 of four (4) years. The term of the member from the Commission on  
297 Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks shall be coterminous with his term

298 on the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks.

299 (d) Any vacancy in the office of an appointed member of  
300 the commission shall be filled by appointment by the Governor for  
301 the balance of the unexpired term.

302 (3) Each member shall have a demonstrated history of  
303 involvement in the matter of jurisdiction for which he is  
304 appointed to represent and his employment and activities must not  
305 conflict with the matter of jurisdiction represented. A member  
306 shall not have a record of conviction of violation of fish and  
307 game or seafood laws or regulations within the five (5) years  
308 preceding his appointment or a record of any felony conviction.

309 (4) The commission shall elect a chairman who shall preside  
310 at all meetings of the commission, and the commission shall also  
311 elect a vice-chairman who shall serve in the absence or inability  
312 of the chairman. \* \* \*

313 (5) Each member shall be paid actual and necessary expenses  
314 incurred in attending meetings of the commission and in performing  
315 his duties away from his domicile under assignment by the  
316 commission. In addition, members shall receive the per diem  
317 authorized in Section 25-3-69, Mississippi Code of 1972.

318 (6) The commission shall adopt rules and regulations  
319 governing times and places of meetings and shall adopt bylaws  
320 governing the manner of conducting its business. Each member  
321 shall take the oath prescribed by Section 268 of the Mississippi  
322 Constitution of 1890 and shall, before assuming office, enter into  
323 bond in the amount of Thirty Thousand Dollars (\$30,000.00), to be  
324 approved by the Secretary of State conditioned according to law  
325 and payable to the State of Mississippi.

326 (7) The commission shall not take any action, except by vote  
327 in meeting assembled, and such action shall be included in the  
328 minutes of the commission. A majority of the members shall  
329 constitute a quorum of the commission.

330 (8) The commission, through the Department of Marine

331 Resources, shall devise a plan to make licenses available in each  
332 coastal county.

333 (9) (a) There is hereby created a marine resources  
334 technical advisory council composed of the Executive Director of  
335 the Gulf Coast Research Lab, or his designee; the Executive  
336 Director of the Department of Environmental Quality, or his  
337 designee; and the Executive Director of the Department of  
338 Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, or his designee.

339 (b) The council shall give technical assistance to the  
340 commission.

341 (10) For purposes of this section the following definitions  
342 apply:

343 (a) "Charter boat operator" means an individual who  
344 operates a vessel for hire guiding sports fishermen for a fee and  
345 is duly licensed to engage in such activity in the State of  
346 Mississippi.

347 (b) "Commercial fisherman" means a fisherman who sells,  
348 barter or exchanges any or all of his catch or who is paid for  
349 attempting to catch marine species.

350 (c) "Commercial seafood processor" means an individual  
351 who engages in the business of purchasing seafood products and  
352 preparing them for resale and who is duly licensed to engage in  
353 such commercial activity in the State of Mississippi.

354 (d) "Incorporated environmental nonprofit organization"  
355 means an organization duly incorporated in any state as a  
356 nonprofit organization and whose stated goals and purposes are the  
357 conservation of natural resources.

358 (e) "Non-seafood industry" means an industry not  
359 involved in the catching, processing or packaging of marine  
360 species.

361 (f) "Recreational sports fisherman" means an individual  
362 who catches or harvests marine species only for recreation or  
363 personal consumption and not for sale.

364 SECTION 6. Section 63-11-19, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
365 amended as follows:

366 63-11-19. A chemical analysis of the person's breath, blood  
367 or urine, to be considered valid under the provisions of this  
368 section, shall have been performed according to methods approved  
369 by the State Crime Laboratory created pursuant to Section 45-1-17  
370 and the Commissioner of Public Safety and performed by an  
371 individual possessing a valid permit issued by the State Crime  
372 Laboratory for making such analysis. The State Crime Laboratory  
373 and the Commissioner of Public Safety are authorized to approve  
374 satisfactory techniques or methods, to ascertain the  
375 qualifications and competence of individuals to conduct such  
376 analyses, and to issue permits which shall be subject to  
377 termination or revocation at the discretion of the State Crime  
378 Laboratory. The State Crime Laboratory shall not approve the  
379 permit required herein for any law enforcement officer other than  
380 a member of the State Highway Patrol, a sheriff or his deputies, a  
381 city policeman, an officer of a state-supported institution of  
382 higher learning campus police force, a security officer appointed  
383 and commissioned pursuant to the Pearl River Valley Water Supply  
384 District Security Officer Law of 1978, a national park ranger, a  
385 national park ranger technician, a military policeman stationed at  
386 a United States military base located within this state other than  
387 a military policeman of the Army or Air National Guard or of  
388 Reserve Units of the Army, Air Force, Navy or Marine Corps, a  
389 marine law enforcement officer employed by the Department of  
390 Marine Resources, or a conservation officer employed by the  
391 Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. The  
392 permit given a conservation officer or a marine law enforcement  
393 officer shall authorize such officer to administer tests only for  
394 violations of Sections 59-23-1 through 59-23-7.

395 The State Crime Laboratory shall make periodic, but not less  
396 frequently than quarterly, tests of the methods, machines or

397 devices used in making chemical analysis of a person's breath as  
398 shall be necessary to ensure the accuracy thereof, and shall issue  
399 its certificate to verify the accuracy of the same.

400 SECTION 7. Section 49-4-7, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
401 amended as follows:

402 49-4-7. The commission \* \* \* shall establish and appoint  
403 advisory committees for \* \* \* Parks and Recreation and \* \* \*  
404 Wildlife and Fisheries. The advisory committees shall aid the  
405 commission \* \* \* in formulating policies, discussing problems and  
406 considering other matters related to these \* \* \* areas as  
407 designated by the commission.

408 The department is designated as the single state agency to  
409 receive and expend any federal funds \* \* \* made available for  
410 matters within the jurisdiction of the department.

411 The department shall be responsible for conserving, managing,  
412 developing and protecting the wildlife and freshwater fisheries  
413 resources of the state \* \* \*. The department shall coordinate all  
414 functions of state government related to wildlife and fisheries  
415 resources that are within the jurisdiction of the department.

416 SECTION 8. Section 59-21-111, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
417 amended as follows:

418 59-21-111. (1) The Mississippi Commission on Wildlife,  
419 Fisheries and Parks shall be the Mississippi Boat and Water Safety  
420 Commission, and shall exercise the duties and responsibilities of  
421 the Mississippi Boat and Water Safety Commission through the  
422 Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, insofar  
423 as practicable under the provisions of Chapter 4 of Title 49,  
424 Mississippi Code of 1972; except on marine waters under the  
425 jurisdiction of the Commission on Marine Resources.

426 (2) The Commission on Marine Resources shall exercise the  
427 duties and responsibilities of the Mississippi Boat and Water  
428 Safety Commission through the Mississippi Department of Marine  
429 Resources on the marine waters of the state. The Commission on

430 Marine Resources shall not exercise any powers related to  
431 numbering of undocumented vessels. Those powers are vested  
432 exclusively in the Commission on Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks.

433 SECTION 9. This act shall take effect and be in force from  
434 and after July 1, 1999.