

By: Watson

To: Universities and
Colleges;
Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 482

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-106-31, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,
2 TO DECREASE THE MINIMUM ACT SCORE REQUIRED FOR STUDENTS TO BE
3 ELIGIBLE FOR A SCHOLARSHIP UNDER THE MISSISSIPPI EMINENT SCHOLARS
4 PROGRAM; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

6 SECTION 1. Section 37-106-31, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
7 amended as follows:

8 37-106-31. (1) There is created a Mississippi Eminent
9 Scholars Fund, to be administered by the Mississippi Postsecondary
10 Education Financial Assistance Board established under Section
11 37-106-9. The board shall set the date that will serve as the
12 deadline for applying for an award under this section and award
13 scholarships to each Mississippi student who:

14 (a) (i) Is recognized by the merit or achievement
15 programs of the National Merit Scholarship Corporation or the
16 National Achievement Scholarship as a semifinalist or finalist,
17 and has obtained a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.5
18 calculated on a 4.0 scale in high school subjects acceptable for
19 credit toward a diploma, after seven (7) semesters certified by
20 the high school counselor or other authorized school official on
21 the application, and graduation from high school verified by the
22 institution before disbursement of award; or

23 (ii) Has scored twenty-six (26) on the American
24 College Testing Program or its equivalent, and has obtained a
25 minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.5 calculated on a 4.0
26 scale after seven (7) semesters certified by the high school
27 counselor or other authorized school official on the application,
28 and graduation from high school verified by the institution before
29 disbursement of award, or the equivalent in high school subjects
30 acceptable for credit toward a diploma; or

31 (iii) Has attended a home education program during
32 grade levels 9 through 12 and has scored twenty-six (26) on the
33 American College Testing Program or its equivalent; and

34 (iv) Has been certified by the college or
35 university to the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial
36 Assistance Board as a Mississippi Eminent Scholar.

37 (b) Meets the general requirements for student
38 eligibility, except as otherwise provided in this section.

39 (c) Dependents of Mississippi residents who are on
40 military or public service assignments away from Mississippi when
41 such dependents live with such Mississippi residents and receive
42 high school diplomas from non-Mississippi schools shall be
43 exempted from certain requirements by the board.

44 (d) Files an application for an award during his last
45 year in high school within established time limits.

46 (e) Attends, on a full-time basis, any state
47 institution of higher learning or public community or junior
48 college, or any regionally accredited, state-approved, nonprofit
49 four- or two-year college or university located in the State of
50 Mississippi as listed in subsection (4)(d) of Section 37-106-29.

51 (f) Enrolls as a first-time-in-college student. Any
52 student who earns postsecondary academic credit prior to or during
53 the summer immediately subsequent to receiving a high school

54 diploma, who is dually enrolled in secondary and postsecondary
55 educational institutions, or who is enrolled in the early
56 admission program of a postsecondary institution shall be exempt
57 from this requirement.

58 (g) Is a resident of the State of Mississippi.
59 Residency status for purposes of receiving grants under this
60 section shall be determined in the same manner as resident status
61 for tuition purposes as set forth in Sections 37-103-1 through
62 37-103-29, with the exception of Section 37-103-17.

63 (2) (a) Students who apply for awards no later than the
64 date set by the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial
65 Assistance Board as the deadline for applying for an award during
66 their last year in high school may later reapply to receive awards
67 during subsequent application periods when they do not accept
68 their initial awards. Similarly, students who receive initial
69 awards and who later do not accept renewal awards may reapply to
70 receive awards during subsequent application periods. Students
71 who apply under this paragraph must submit reinstatement
72 applications within three (3) years of filing their initial
73 applications. The institution shall accept reinstatement
74 applications according to dates set by the Mississippi
75 Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board and shall
76 determine the eligibility of such applicants in the same manner as
77 first-time applicants, except that students who apply pursuant to
78 this paragraph shall be required to have maintained the equivalent
79 of a 3.5 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale for all
80 college work attempted. The board shall not make awards to
81 reinstatement applicants who submit applications that are received

82 after the deadline set by the Mississippi Postsecondary Education
83 Financial Assistance Board.

84 (b) The board shall create a renewal application for
85 each student who received the award for one or more terms during
86 the immediately preceding academic year.

87 (3) (a) The annual award to a student shall be up to Two
88 Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500.00) for tuition and fees.
89 Payment of the Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant shall be made
90 payable to the recipient and the educational institution and
91 mailed directly to the institution, to be applied first to
92 tuition.

93 (b) Within six (6) weeks of the end of regular
94 registration, inclusive of a drop-add period, institutions shall
95 certify to the board the eligibility status of each awarded
96 student. The eligibility status of each student to receive a
97 disbursement shall be determined by each institution as of this
98 date. Institutions shall not be required to reevaluate a
99 student's eligibility status after this date for purposes of
100 amending eligibility determinations previously made. However, an
101 institution shall be requested to make refunds for students who
102 receive award disbursements and terminate enrollment for any
103 reason during the academic term when an institution's refund
104 policies permit a student to receive a refund under the
105 circumstances.

106 (c) Institutions shall certify to the board the amount
107 of funds disbursed to each student and shall remit to the board
108 any undisbursed advances within sixty (60) days of the end of
109 regular registration.

110 (4) A recipient shall maintain the equivalent of a 3.5
111 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale, or shall maintain
112 an approved equivalent student progress evaluation plan, on at
113 least twelve (12) hours per quarter, trimester or semester in
114 order to be eligible for a continuation of the award. No student
115 may receive a Mississippi Eminent Scholars' Fund award for more
116 than the equivalent semesters or quarters required to complete one
117 (1) degree or certificate program per institution. The award may
118 be renewed annually upon certification of eligibility by the
119 eligible institutions that the recipient meets the necessary
120 qualifications. If any recipient transfers from one university,
121 community college or junior college to another, his award will be
122 transferable, provided he is otherwise eligible for the award. If
123 a student fails to maintain continuous enrollment, and is not
124 granted an exception for cause by the administering agency, the
125 student is ineligible to receive the Mississippi Eminent Scholars
126 Grant during the following semester or trimester or term of the
127 regular academic year.

128 (5) The board may conduct its own annual audits of any
129 institution participating in the Mississippi Eminent Scholars
130 Grant Program. The board may suspend or revoke an institution's
131 eligibility to receive future monies under the program if it finds
132 that the institution has not complied with the provisions of this
133 section.

134 (6) For purposes of this section, certificated shall mean,
135 but not be limited to, all postsecondary vocational programs in
136 eligible institutions as identified in subsection (4)(d) of
137 Section 37-106-29.

138 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from
139 and after July 1, 2000.