

By: Broomfield, Huddleston

To: County Affairs

## HOUSE BILL NO. 976

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTIONS 19-21-103 AND 41-61-57, MISSISSIPPI  
2 CODE OF 1972, TO REVISE THE MINIMUM EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS OF A  
3 CORONER AND COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER INVESTIGATOR; AND FOR RELATED  
4 PURPOSES.

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

6 SECTION 1. Section 19-21-103, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
7 amended as follows:[BD1]

8 19-21-103. (1) Beginning with the 2003 general election and  
9 thereafter, each candidate for the elected office of coroner  
10 shall, as a minimum, possess a bachelor's degree for a health care  
11 profession or a related field of science, be twenty-one (21) years  
12 of age or older, and be a qualified elector of the county in which  
13 elected.

14 (2) The minimum education requirements of subsection (1) of  
15 this section and subsection (1) of Section 41-61-57 shall not  
16 apply to any coroner holding office on July 1, 1986, who is  
17 reelected in the 1987 general election and thereafter, as long as  
18 such coroner maintains continuous active service as county medical  
19 examiner or county medical examiner investigator. However, all  
20 other portions of subsection (1) of Section 41-61-57 shall apply  
21 to such coroners.

22 SECTION 2. Section 41-61-57, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
23 amended as follows:[BD2]

24 41-61-57. (1) There are hereby created the positions of  
25 county medical examiners and county medical examiner  
26 investigators, to be established as herein provided through  
27 successful completion of the death investigation training school

28 provided for in subsection (5) of this section. Each county  
29 medical examiner (CME) shall be a doctor of medicine (M.D.) or  
30 osteopathic medicine (D.O.) licensed in the State of Mississippi.  
31 Each county medical examiner investigator (CMEI) shall be a  
32 nonphysician who shall, as a minimum, possess a high school  
33 graduation diploma or its equivalent. Extra consideration for the  
34 CMEI position may be given for experience and/or training in  
35 health-related fields and medicolegal death investigations.  
36 However, any person who first becomes a CMEI after January 1,  
37 2004, shall as a minimum possess a bachelor's degree for a health  
38 care profession or a related field of science.

39 (2) Each coroner elected in the 1987 general election and  
40 thereafter, upon successful completion of the death investigation  
41 training school provided for in subsection (5) of this section,  
42 shall be recognized as a county medical examiner or county medical  
43 examiner investigator, according to the qualifications set out in  
44 subsection (1) of this section, and shall be designated the chief  
45 for the county in which he was elected. If the elected or  
46 appointed coroner fails to successfully complete the death  
47 investigation training school, and thus is unable to take the oath  
48 of office, as provided in Section 19-21-105, there shall promptly  
49 be appointed a coroner pro tempore in the manner prescribed by  
50 Section 9-1-27, and that person shall be designated the chief  
51 county medical examiner or county medical examiner investigator  
52 until the time of the next death investigation training school,  
53 which he must successfully complete or be removed from office.  
54 Any elected coroner who has failed to successfully complete the  
55 death investigation training school may attend any subsequent  
56 death investigation training school conducted during the term for  
57 which he was elected, and upon the successful completion thereof,  
58 he shall become the chief CME or CMEI for the county in which he  
59 was elected. The coroner pro tempore then shall become a deputy  
60 CME or CMEI, provided he has successfully completed the death  
61 investigation training school. Notwithstanding anything in this  
62 section to the contrary, each coroner holding office on July 1,  
63 1986, shall be the chief CME or CMEI for the county in which he  
64 was elected through the expiration of his term in January 1988

65 without having to attend the death investigation training school;  
66 however, he may voluntarily attend any such school conducted prior  
67 to that time.

68 (3) There shall be at least one (1) county medical examiner  
69 and/or county medical examiner investigator for each county, and  
70 one (1) county medical examiner or county medical examiner  
71 investigator shall be designated as the chief for each county,  
72 except as otherwise provided in subsection (4) of this section.  
73 Any county may have deputy county medical examiners or deputy  
74 county medical examiner investigators as deemed necessary who  
75 shall be appointed jointly by the board of supervisors and the CME  
76 or CMEI. However, when the population of a county reaches a total  
77 of twenty thousand (20,000) or greater, there shall be one or more  
78 officially appointed deputies. Deputies shall be subject to the  
79 same qualifications, training and certification requirements, and  
80 shall possess the same authority and discharge the same duties, as  
81 other county medical examiners or county medical examiner  
82 investigators, and shall receive fees and expenses as provided in  
83 Sections 41-61-69 and 41-61-75. Any CME or CMEI may be removed by  
84 the State Medical Examiner prior to the expiration of his term as  
85 CME or CMEI for inefficiency, or other good cause, after written  
86 notice and a hearing in compliance with due process law.

87 (4) One (1) person may serve as the chief CME or CMEI for  
88 two (2) or more adjacent counties when that person consents and  
89 the boards of supervisors of each county involved and the State  
90 Medical Examiner consent in writing. Each respective county  
91 involved shall be responsible for payment for the services given  
92 to that county by the chief CME or CMEI.

93 (5) Chief and deputy CME's and CMEI's shall attend the death  
94 investigation training school provided by the Mississippi Crime  
95 Laboratory and the State Medical Examiner, and shall successfully  
96 complete subsequent testing on the subject material by the State  
97 Medical Examiner at least once every four (4) years. Room, board

98 and transportation expenses for attending the school shall be  
99 borne by the county in which the CME or CMEI is serving. In  
100 addition to the above training, the individual shall receive at  
101 least twenty-four (24) hours annually of continuing education as  
102 prescribed and certified by the State Medical Examiner. If the  
103 above requirements for training or continuing education are not  
104 met, the individual immediately shall be disqualified and removed  
105 from office as CME and/or CMEI. Reapplication for the office may  
106 be made the following year after removal.

107 SECTION 3. The Attorney General of the State of Mississippi  
108 shall submit this act, immediately upon approval by the Governor,  
109 or upon approval by the Legislature subsequent to a veto, to the  
110 Attorney General of the United States or to the United States  
111 District Court for the District of Columbia in accordance with the  
112 provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended and  
113 extended.

114 SECTION 4. This act shall take effect and be in force from  
115 and after July 1, 2000 or the date it is effectuated under Section  
116 5 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended and extended, which  
117 ever is the later date.