HOUSE BILL NO. 1714
(As Sent to Governor)

AN ACT TO AMEND CHAPTER 816, LOCAL AND PRIVATE LAWS OF 1991, AS AMENDED BY CHAPTER 953, LOCAL AND PRIVATE LAWS OF 1996; TO REVISE THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH THE WASHINGTON COUNTY CONVENTION AND VISITORS COMMITTEE MAY USE THE PROCEEDS OF THE ADDITIONAL SALES TAX IMPOSED ON CERTAIN ESTABLISHMENTS IN WASHINGTON COUNTY; TO REVISE THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE WASHINGTON COUNTY CONVENTION AND VISITORS COMMITTEE; TO REMOVE THE REPEALER ON THE WASHINGTON COUNTY CONVENTION AND VISITORS COMMITTEE AND THE AUTHORITY OF THE WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS TO IMPOSE SUCH ADDITIONAL TAX; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. Chapter 816, Local and Private Laws of 1991, as amended by Chapter 953, Local and Private Laws of 1996, is amended as follows:

Section 1. The Economic Development District of Washington County, created pursuant to Section 19-5-99, Mississippi Code of 1972, is hereby authorized and empowered, in its discretion, to create by resolution duly adopted and entered on its minutes, a committee entitled the "Washington County Convention and Visitors Committee," to be operated under the umbrella and authority of the Economic Development District of Washington County.

Section 2. The Economic Development District of Washington County may empower the committee upon approval of the district as follows:

(a) To exercise activities relating to establishing, promoting and developing tourism within the county;

(b) To furnish, equip, staff and operate any and all facilities and equipment necessary or useful in the promotion of tourism within the county;

(c) To receive and expend revenues from any sources

H. B. No. 1714
00\HR40\R1978CS
PAGE 1
including, but not limited to, private enterprise and those
revenues provided by this act;

(d) To lease or contract for any equipment useful and
necessary in the promotion of tourism and convention business; and
(e) To have and exercise all powers necessary or
convenient to effect any and all of the purposes for which the
committee is organized, except that the committee may not own or
sell real property, and further, to appoint and employ individuals
and agencies acting in its behalf for any and all of the
aforementioned powers and responsibilities.

Section 3. (1) For the purposes of providing funds to
promote tourism and conventions in Washington County, the Board of
Supervisors of Washington County is hereby authorized to levy and
assess against and to collect from every person operating a hotel,
motel or restaurant or on-premises retailer's permit which are
legal under the provisions of Chapter 1, Title 67, Mississippi
Code of 1972 (hereinafter referred to as "taxable establishments")
in Washington County an assessment in addition to all other taxes
now imposed, which shall not exceed a sum equal to one percent
(1%) of the gross proceeds of sales of such taxable establishments
in Washington County, excluding any charges which are exempt from
taxes levied under the Mississippi Sales Tax Law, Chapter 65,
Title 27, Mississippi Code of 1972. Persons liable for the tax
imposed herein shall add the amount of such tax to the sales price
or gross income and, in addition, shall collect, insofar as
practicable, the amount of the tax due by him from the purchaser
at the time the sales price or gross income is collected. All
words, terms and phrases used herein shall have the same meanings
ascribed to them in Chapter 65, Title 27, Mississippi Code of
1972.

This tax shall not apply to restaurants that have gross
proceeds of sales or gross income of less than One Hundred
Thousand Dollars ($100,000.00) per calendar year. In order to
calculate gross proceeds of sales or gross income, the sales or income of all of the establishments owned, operated or controlled by the same person, persons or corporation shall be aggregated.

(2) For the purposes of this act, the words "hotel" and "motel" shall mean a place of lodging that at any one (1) time will accommodate transient guests on a daily or weekly basis and that are known to the trade as such. Hotels and motels with ten (10) or less rental units are exempt.

(3) For the purposes of this act, "restaurant" means a place which is regularly engaged in serving cooked or prepared meals to customers for compensation for on- or off-premises consumption, including restaurants and lunch counters located in other retail establishments, but shall not include delicatessen departments of grocery and convenience stores which do not provide seating facilities for customers for on-premises consumption of meals. Restaurants and establishments selling alcoholic beverages operated by bona fide private clubs organized for some common object other than the sale of goods and alcoholic beverages are exempt from the tax authorized herein.

(4) Such tax shall be collected by and paid to the State Tax Commission on a form prescribed by the State Tax Commission in the same manner that state sales taxes are computed, collected and paid and the full enforcement provisions and all other provisions of Chapter 65, Title 27, Mississippi Code of 1972, shall apply as necessary to the implementation and administration of this act.

(5) The proceeds of such tax less three percent (3%) to be retained by the State Tax Commission to defray the costs of collection shall be paid to the Convention and Visitors Committee on or before the fifteenth day of the month following the month in which collected.

(6) The proceeds of the tax shall not be considered by Washington County or any municipality therein as general fund revenues, but shall be dedicated solely for the purpose of
carrying out the programs and activities of the committee. The Washington County Convention and Visitors Committee may allocate 
annually an amount not to exceed Twenty-five Thousand Dollars 
($25,000.00) per year to Washington County, Mississippi, in 
consideration of use of county facilities and support services. 

Section 4. (1) The funds herein authorized shall be 
expended by the Convention and Visitors Committee upon approval by 
the Economic Development District of Washington County. The 
committee shall be composed of nine (9) members to be appointed by 
the district as hereinafter provided. Five (5) members of the 
committee shall be the five (5) members appointed to the district 
by the board of supervisors and the presiding officer of the 
district shall appoint four (4) members of the committee. The 
four (4) members appointed by the presiding officer shall consist 
of one (1) member from the Greenville Area Chamber of Commerce, 
one (1) member from the alcoholic beverage sales business, one (1) 
member from the hotel or motel business, and one (1) member from 
the restaurant business. In the selection of committee members, 
the district shall make every effort to select individuals who are 
knowledgeable of, or actively involved in, the tourism industry. 
The committee shall be appointed within sixty (60) days following 
the passage of this act, and the members shall serve for terms of 
three (3) years. The term of the member appointed by the 
presiding officer of the Economic Development District of 
Washington County from the alcoholic beverage sales business shall 
expire on the effective date of House Bill No. 1714, 2000 Regular 
Session, and from and after such date, such position on the 
Washington County Convention and Visitors Committee shall be 
filled by one (1) at large member appointed by the presiding 
officer of the Economic Development District of Washington County. 

(2) All subsequent appointments shall be made for terms of 
three (3) years, except that the appointment to fill a vacancy 
shall be for the unexpired term only.
(3) The members of the committee shall serve without compensation and shall elect officers and adopt rules and regulations. The committee shall further fix a regular meeting date, but may provide for special meetings. The committee shall keep minutes of its proceedings, as are necessary to carry out its responsibilities under this act. A quorum of the committee shall consist of five (5) members.

(4) Any member of the committee may be removed from office by the district for one (1) of the following reasons:

(a) Conviction of a felony; or

(b) Failure to attend three (3) consecutive meetings without just cause.

If a member of the committee is removed for one (1) of the above reasons, the vacancy shall be filled in the manner prescribed in this section.

Section 5. The tax authorized in this act shall not be levied until the board of supervisors shall have adopted a resolution favoring the tax levy and fixing the amount of the tax levy and the date on which the tax levy is proposed to commence, which shall be the first day of a month, and the board shall have published notice of its intention to levy the tax. The notice shall be published once each week for at least three (3) consecutive weeks in a newspaper having a general circulation in the county. The first publication of such notice shall be made not less than twenty-one (21) days prior to the date fixed in the resolution on which the board proposes to levy such tax, and the last publication shall be made not more than seven (7) days prior to such date. If, within the time of giving notice, twenty percent (20%) or fifteen hundred (1500), whichever is less, of the qualified electors of the county shall file a written petition against the levy of such tax then such tax shall not be levied unless authorized by a majority of the qualified electors of such county, voting at an election to be called and held for that
purpose. Prior to the effective date of the tax levy approved as herein provided, the board of supervisors shall furnish to the Chairman of the State Tax Commission a certified copy of the resolution evidencing such tax levy.

Section 6. Before the expenditure of funds herein prescribed, a budget reflecting the anticipated receipts and expenditures for such purposes as promotion, advertising and operation shall be approved by the board of supervisors. The first budget of receipts and expenditures shall cover the period beginning with the effective date of the tax and ending with the end of the county's fiscal year and, thereafter, the budget shall be on the same fiscal basis as the budget of Washington County.

Section 7. Accounting for receipts and expenditures of the funds herein described shall be made separately from the accounting of receipts and expenditures of the committee and the district and from the general fund and any other funds of Washington County. The records reflecting the receipts and expenditures of the funds prescribed herein shall be audited annually by an independent certified public accountant, and the accountant shall make a written report of his audit to the board of supervisors, the district and the committee. Such audit shall be made and completed as soon as practicable after the close of the fiscal year and the expenses of such audit may be paid from the funds derived pursuant to Section 3 of this act.

Section 8. The provisions of Sections 1 through 7 of this act shall be repealed on July 1, 2003.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.