

By: Harden

To: Education;
Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2188

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-159-9, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,
2 TO INCLUDE TEACHERS CURRENTLY EMPLOYED IN CRITICAL SHORTAGE AREAS
3 OF THE STATE IN THE UNIVERSITY ASSISTED TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND
4 RETENTION GRANT PROGRAM; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

6 SECTION 1. Section 37-159-9, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
7 amended as follows:[RDD1]

8 37-159-9. (1) There is established the University Assisted
9 Teacher Recruitment and Retention Grant Program within the State
10 Department of Education. The purpose of the program shall be to
11 attract and retain qualified teachers to or in those geographical
12 areas of the state where there exists a critical shortage of
13 teachers by making available scholarships to persons working
14 towards a Master of Education degree or an Educational Specialist
15 degree at an institution of higher learning whose teacher
16 education program is approved by the State Board of Education.

17 (2) Any institution of higher learning in the State of
18 Mississippi which offers a Master of Education degree or an
19 Educational Specialist degree may apply to the department for
20 participation in the program. Under the program, participating
21 institutions shall collaborate with the Mississippi Teacher Center
22 to identify, recruit and place teacher education graduates, from

23 both within the state and out-of-state, in school districts
24 situated within those areas of the state where there exists a
25 critical shortage of teachers, as designated by the State Board of
26 Education.

27 (3) The State Department of Education shall provide funds to
28 participating institutions of higher learning for the purpose of
29 awarding scholarships to qualified persons pursuing a Master of
30 Education degree or an Educational Specialist degree at such
31 institutions while rendering service to the state as a licensed
32 teacher in a school district in a geographical area of the state
33 where there exists a critical shortage of teachers, as approved by
34 the State Board of Education. The financial scholarship shall be
35 applied to the total cost for tuition, books, materials and fees
36 at the institution in which the student is enrolled, not to exceed
37 an amount equal to the highest total cost of tuition, books,
38 materials and fees assessed by a state institution of higher
39 learning during that school year. Teachers who relocate within
40 Mississippi from out-of-state in order to participate in the
41 program shall be classified as residents of the state for tuition
42 purposes. Teachers currently employed in a school district in a
43 critical shortage area of the state shall be fully eligible to
44 participate in the University Assisted Teacher Recruitment and
45 Retention Grant Program established under this section.

46 (4) Students awarded financial scholarships under the
47 University Assisted Teacher Recruitment and Retention Grant
48 Program may receive such awards for a maximum of four (4) school
49 years; however, the maximum number of awards which may be made
50 shall not exceed the length of time required to complete the
51 number of academic hours necessary to obtain a Master of Education
52 degree or an Educational Specialist degree. Financial
53 scholarships under the program shall not be based upon an

54 applicant's eligibility for financial aid.

55 (5) Persons relocating to a geographical area of the state
56 where there exists a critical shortage of teachers, as approved by
57 the State Board of Education, to participate in the University
58 Assisted Teacher Recruitment and Retention Grant Program shall be
59 eligible for reimbursement for their moving expenses to the
60 critical teacher shortage from the State Board of Education. The
61 State Board of Education shall promulgate rules and regulations
62 necessary for the administration of the relocation expense
63 reimbursement component of the University Assisted Teacher
64 Recruitment and Retention Grant Program.

65 (6) Subject to the availability of funds, the State Board of
66 Education may provide for professional development and support
67 services as may be necessary for the retention of teachers
68 participating in the program in those geographical areas of the
69 state where there exists a critical shortage of teachers.

70 (7) Any person participating in the program who fails to
71 complete a program of study that will enable that person to obtain
72 a Master of Education degree or Educational Specialist degree
73 shall become liable immediately to the State Board of Education
74 for the sum of all awards made to that person under the program,
75 plus interest accruing at the current Stafford Loan rate at the
76 time the person abrogates his participation in the program.

77 (8) As a condition for participation in the program, a
78 teacher shall agree to employment or continued employment as a
79 licensed teacher in a school district located in a geographical
80 area of the state where there exists a critical shortage of
81 teachers, as designated by the State Board of Education, for a

82 period of not less than three (3) years, which shall include those
83 years of service rendered while obtaining the Master of Education
84 degree or Educational Specialist degree. However, for any person
85 who obtained a baccalaureate degree in education with a financial
86 scholarship under the Critical Needs Teacher Scholarship Program
87 and who entered the University Assisted Teacher Recruitment and
88 Retention Grant Program before rendering service as a teacher, the
89 period of employment for the purposes of this subsection shall be
90 two (2) years, in addition to the employment commitment required
91 under the Critical Needs Teacher Scholarship Program. Any person
92 failing to comply with this employment commitment in any required
93 school year shall immediately be in breach of contract and become
94 liable immediately to the State Department of Education for the
95 sum of all scholarships awarded and relocation expenses granted to
96 that person, less one-third (1/3) of the amount of that sum for
97 each year that service was rendered, or for those persons whose
98 required period of employment is two (2) years, less one-half
99 (1/2) of the amount of that sum for each year that service was
100 rendered, plus interest accruing at the current Stafford Loan rate
101 at the time the breach occurs, except in the case of a deferral
102 for cause by the State Board of Education when there is no
103 employment position immediately available upon the teacher's
104 obtaining of the Master of Education degree or Educational
105 Specialist degree. After the period of such deferral, the person
106 shall begin or resume the required teaching duties or shall become
107 liable to the board under this subsection. If a claim for
108 repayment under this subsection is placed in the hands of an
109 attorney for collection after default, then the obligor shall be

110 liable for an additional amount equal to a reasonable attorney's
111 fee.

112 (9) All funds received by the State Department of Education
113 from the repayment of scholarship awards and relocation expenses
114 by program participants shall be deposited in the Mississippi
115 Critical Teacher Shortage Fund.

116 (10) The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules and
117 regulations necessary for the proper administration of the
118 University Assisted Teacher Recruitment and Retention Grant
119 Program.

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