HOUSE BILL NO. 109

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 85-5-7, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO REVISE JOINT AND SEVERAL LIABILITY IN TORT ACTIONS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. Section 85-5-7, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

85-5-7. (1) As used in this section "fault" means an act or omission of a person which is a proximate cause of injury or death to another person or persons, damages to property, tangible or intangible, or economic injury, including but not limited to negligence, malpractice, strict liability, absolute liability or failure to warn. "Fault" shall not include any tort which results from an act or omission committed with a specific wrongful intent.

(2) * * * In any civil action based on fault, the liability for damages caused by two (2) or more persons shall not be joint and several * * *

(3) * * * In any civil action based on fault, the liability for damages caused by two (2) or more persons shall be several only, and not joint and several and a joint tort-feasor shall be liable only for the amount of damages allocated to him in direct proportion to his percentage of fault. In assessing percentages of fault an employer and the employer's employee or a principal and the principal's agent shall be considered as one (1) defendant when the liability of such employer or principal has been caused by the wrongful or negligent act or omission of the employee or agent.

H. B. No. 109
01/HR03/R269
PAGE 1 (CJR\LN)
(4) Any defendant held jointly liable under this section shall have a right of contribution against fellow joint tort-feasors. A defendant shall be held responsible for contribution to other joint tort-feasors only for the percentage of fault assessed to such defendant.

(5) Nothing in this section shall eliminate or diminish any defenses or immunities which currently exist, except as expressly noted herein.

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(6) In actions involving joint tort-feasors, the trier of fact shall determine the percentage of fault for each party alleged to be at fault.

(7) Nothing in this section shall be construed to create a cause of action. Nothing in this section shall be construed, in any way, to alter the immunity of any person.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2001.