HOUSE BILL NO. 393

AN ACT TO REQUIRE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES TO BLOCK MINORS' ACCESS TO OFFENSIVE AND HARMFUL INTERNET MATERIAL ON COMPUTERS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. (1) Each public school that has computers accessible by students shall equip the computers with software that prevents students from gaining Internet access to offensive or harmful material or data not suitable for children. As an alternative, the school may purchase Internet connectivity from an Internet service provider which provides filtering services in order to limit access to such offensive or harmful material or data not suitable for children.

(2) Before September 1, 2001, the school board of each local school district shall ensure that the schools in that district have complied with subsection (1) of this section and shall prescribe, by rules and regulations, standards on acceptable uses of the Internet in the schools by students and school employees.

SECTION 2. (1) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (2) of this section, each public library that has a public access computer that is available for use by persons under eighteen (18) years of age shall equip the computer with software that prevents such persons from gaining access to offensive or harmful material or data not suitable for minors. As an alternative, the library may purchase Internet connectivity from an Internet service provider which provides filtering services in order to limit access to such offensive or harmful material or data not suitable for minors.
(2) The board of trustees of any public library system, in its discretion, may hold a public meeting during which the board may vote to exempt the libraries in that system from the requirements of subsection (1) of this section. Notice of such meeting must be provided by the board in a newspaper published or having a general circulation in each municipality or county in the library system at least once a week for three (3) consecutive weeks before the meeting, with the first publication being not more than twenty-one (21) days before the scheduled date for the meeting. The notice must state the time and place for the meeting and must contain a statement that the board will vote, after discussion and receiving public comment, on limiting materials accessible by minors through the Internet in the public libraries. If the board votes to exempt the libraries in that system from the requirements of subsection (1) of this section, an alternative means must be established for protecting persons under the age of eighteen (18) years from offensive or harmful material or data not suitable for minors on the Internet in the public library system.

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2001.