MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION 2001
By: Representatives Ellzey, Hamilton
To: Military Affairs

HOUSE BILL NO. 542

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 35-3-21, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO REVISE THE CRITERIA FOR SELECTING COUNTY VETERAN SERVICE OFFICERS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. Section 35-3-21, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

35-3-21. In order to maintain offices and pay personnel for the purpose of assisting all residents of the State of Mississippi who served in the military or naval forces of the United States during any war, their relatives, beneficiaries or dependents, to receive from the United States any and all compensation, hospitalization, insurance or other aid or benefits to which they may be entitled under existing or hereafter enacted laws of the United States, the boards of supervisors in the various counties in the state are hereby authorized and empowered, in their discretion, to expend out of the general county fund, or special veterans' fund herein authorized to be set up, or from both of such funds, such monies necessary to defray the office operating expenses and salary of the county veteran service officers.

Two (2) or more counties may, upon resolution duly adopted by the board of supervisors of each of such counties, agree to establish one (1) veteran service office for all of such counties. When two (2) or more counties enter into such an agreement, each county shall pay such amount mutually agreed upon and duly adopted by resolution of the respective boards of supervisors.

County veteran service officers shall be selected in the following order: (a) honorably discharged or honorably released
veterans of any war or police action in which the Armed Forces of
the United States have been, are or shall be committed for action,
with first preference going to disabled American Veterans
according to their percent of disability, with the highest percent
of disability controlling followed by veterans without disability;
(b) the surviving spouse or child of any such deceased veteran; or
(c) any person employed as a county veteran service officer in any
county of this state on March 30, 1990. From and after July 1, 1990, county veteran service officers shall be certified by the
Mississippi State Veterans' Affairs Board which, among any other
criteria it may establish, shall require such officers to (a)
attend at least one (1) of the two (2) annual training programs
provided for such officers and (b) successfully complete a written
examination each year on the duties and responsibilities of and
assistance available to such officers and veterans. The programs
shall be developed by the State Veterans' Affairs Board. The
program shall include a period of instruction which shall be not
more than three (3) days for veteran service officers receiving
initial certification, and not more than two (2) days for veteran
service officers being recertified. County veteran service
officers who annually receive and complete such instruction in a
manner satisfactory to the Veterans' Affairs Board and in
accordance with this section shall be certified by the board. No
county veteran service officer shall be entitled to receive any
compensation for his services, to which he is otherwise entitled
by law, unless he is annually certified by the board.

County veteran service officers may be employed, in the
discretion of the boards of supervisors, either full time or part
time, but may not hold any other elective or appointive position.
However, this paragraph shall not apply to county veteran service
officers who may be serving in such capacity before March 31,
1990.
The boards of supervisors of the various counties are further authorized and empowered to pay all necessary and actual expenses of county veteran service officers who attend a school of instruction within the State of Mississippi for such county veteran service officers.

It shall also be the duty of the boards of supervisors to aid the United States to defeat all unjust claims for aid or benefit therefrom.

Such expenditures may be made by the several counties acting alone, or in cooperation with other counties, and in cooperation with any federal or state agency carrying out such purposes.

In the event that the general revenues of the county levied under and within the limits of existing taxing statutes are not sufficient to pay the expenses authorized herein, the board of supervisors may, in its discretion, levy an additional tax not to exceed one (1) mill on all taxable property in the county to defray such expenses or any part thereof. Any tax levy made under authority of this chapter shall not be considered in refunding homestead exemption losses under Title 27, Chapter 33, Mississippi Code of 1972.

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