HOUSE BILL NO. 1109  
(As Sent to Governor)

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE AMER-I-CAN PILOT PROGRAM WITHIN THE  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES; TO SET  
FORTH THE PURPOSES OF THE PILOT PROGRAM AND TO REQUIRE THE  
DIVISION TO SUBMIT A REPORT ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAM TO  
CERTAIN LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. (1) The Department of Human Services, Division  
of Youth Services, shall establish a pilot program to be known as  
the "Amer-I-Can Program." The program is designed for youths who  
have been committed to or are confined in Columbia or Oakley  
Training Schools. The objectives of this program are:

(a) To develop greater self-esteem, assume responsible  
attitudes and experience a restructuring of habits and  
conditioning processes;

(b) To develop an appreciation of family members and an  
understanding of the role family structure has in achieving  
successful living;

(c) To develop an understanding of the concept of  
community and collective responsibility;

(d) To develop a prowess in problem solving and  
decision making that will eliminate many of the difficulties that  
were encountered in past experiences;

(e) To develop skills in money management and financial  
stability, thus relieving pressures that have contributed to  
previous difficulties;

(f) To develop communication skills to better express  
thoughts and ideas while acquiring an understanding of and respect  
for the thoughts and ideas of others; and
(g) To acquire employment seeking and retention skills to improve chances of long term, gainful employment.

(2) The Division of Youth Services shall develop policies and procedures to administer the program and shall choose which youths are eligible to participate in the program.

(3) The department may accept any funds, public or private, made available to it for the program.

(4) Before December 1, 2002, the Division of Youth Services shall prepare a report on the effectiveness of the pilot program to be submitted to the chairmen of the Juvenile Justice Committees of the House of Representatives and Senate. The report shall include information concerning the number of youths ordered to participate in the program and the rate of recidivism of youths successfully completing the program. The department shall address whether or not the Amer-I-Can Program should become a permanent program and whether or not it should be considered as an alternative program in each school district.

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