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

SECTION 1. (1) From and after July 1, 2004, justice court judges shall be elected by the qualified electors of each justice court district at an election held at the same time as the election of circuit court judges.

(2) The term of office for justice court judges elected for the term of office commencing in the year 2004 shall be three (3) years and until their successors shall be duly qualified.

Thereafter, the term of office for justice court judges shall be four (4) years and until their successors shall be duly qualified.

SECTION 2. Section 23-15-975, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

23-15-975. As used in Sections 23-15-974 through 23-15-985 of this subarticle, the term "judicial office" includes the office of justice of the Supreme Court, judge of the Court of Appeals, circuit judge, chancellor, county court judge, family court judge and justice court judge. All such justices and judges, except justice court judges, shall be full-time positions and such justices and judges shall not engage in the practice of law before any court, administrative agency or other judicial or
quasi-judicial forum except as provided by law for finalizing pending cases after election to judicial office.

SECTION 3. Section 23-15-193, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

23-15-193. At the election in 1995, and every four (4) years thereafter, there shall be elected a Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Auditor of Public Accounts, State Treasurer, Attorney General, three (3) public service commissioners, three (3) Mississippi Transportation Commissioners, Commissioner of Insurance, Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce, Senators and members of the House of Representatives in the Legislature, district attorneys for the several districts, clerks of the circuit and chancery courts of the several counties, as well as sheriffs, coroners, assessors, surveyors and members of the boards of supervisors and constables, and all other officers to be elected by the people at the general state election. All such officers shall hold their offices for a term of four (4) years, and until their successors are elected and qualified. The state officers shall be elected in the manner prescribed in Section 140 of the Constitution.

SECTION 4. Section 23-15-297, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

23-15-297. All candidates upon entering the race for party nominations for office shall first pay to the proper officer as provided for in Section 23-15-299 for each primary election the following amounts:

(a) Candidates for Governor not to exceed Three Hundred Dollars ($300.00).

(b) Candidates for Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, State Treasurer, Auditor of Public Accounts, Commissioner of Insurance, Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce, State Highway Commissioner and State Public Service Commissioner, not to exceed Two Hundred Dollars ($200.00).
(c) Candidates for district attorney, not to exceed One Hundred Dollars ($100.00).

(d) Candidates for State Senator, State Representative, sheriff, chancery clerk, circuit clerk, tax assessor, tax collector, county attorney, county superintendent of education and board of supervisors, not to exceed Fifteen Dollars ($15.00).

(e) Candidates for county surveyor, county coroner * * * and constable, not to exceed Ten Dollars ($10.00).

(f) Candidates for United States Senator, not to exceed Three Hundred Dollars ($300.00).

(g) Candidates for United States Representative, not to exceed Two Hundred Dollars ($200.00).

SECTION 5. Section 23-15-359, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

23-15-359. (1) The ballot shall contain the names of all party nominees certified by the appropriate executive committee, and independent and special election candidates who have timely filed petitions containing the required signatures. A petition requesting that an independent or special election candidate's name be placed on the ballot for any office shall be filed as provided for in subsection (3) or (4) of this section, as appropriate, and shall be signed by not less than the following number of qualified electors:

(a) For an office elected by the state at large, not less than one thousand (1,000) qualified electors.

(b) For an office elected by the qualified electors of a Supreme Court district, not less than three hundred (300) qualified electors.

(c) For an office elected by the qualified electors of a congressional district, not less than two hundred (200) qualified electors.
(d) For an office elected by the qualified electors of a circuit or chancery court district, not less than one hundred (100) qualified electors.

(e) For an office elected by the qualified electors of a senatorial or representative district, not less than fifty (50) qualified electors.

(f) For an office elected by the qualified electors of a county, not less than fifty (50) qualified electors.

(g) For an office elected by the qualified electors of a supervisors district or justice court district, not less than fifteen (15) qualified electors.

(2) Unless the petition required above shall be filed as provided for in subsection (3) or (4) of this section, as appropriate, the name of the person requested to be a candidate, unless nominated by a political party, shall not be placed upon the ballot. The ballot shall contain the names of each candidate for each office, and such names shall be listed under the name of the political party such candidate represents as provided by law and as certified to the circuit clerk by the State Executive Committee of such political party. In the event such candidate qualifies as an independent as herein provided, he shall be listed on the ballot as an independent candidate.

(3) Petitions for offices described in paragraphs (a), (b), (c) and (d) of subsection (1) of this section, and petitions for offices described in paragraph (e) of subsection (1) of this section for districts composed of more than one (1) county or parts of more than one (1) county, shall be filed with the State Board of Election Commissioners by no later than 5:00 p.m. on the same date by which candidates for nominations in the political party primary elections are required to pay the fee provided for in Section 23-15-297, Mississippi Code of 1972.

(4) Petitions for offices described in paragraphs (f) and (g) of subsection (1) of this section, and petitions for offices...
described in paragraph (e) of subsection (1) of this section for districts composed of one (1) county or less, shall be filed with the proper circuit clerk by no later than 5:00 p.m. on the same date by which candidates for nominations in the political party elections are required to pay the fee provided for in Section 23-15-297; provided, however, that no petition may be filed before January 1 of the year in which the election for the office is held. The circuit clerk shall notify the county commissioners of election of all persons who have filed petitions with such clerk. Such notification shall occur within two (2) business days and shall contain all necessary information.

(5) The commissioners may also have printed upon the ballot any local issue election matter that is authorized to be held on the same date as the regular or general election pursuant to Section 23-15-375; provided, however, that the ballot form of such local issue must be filed with the commissioners of election by the appropriate governing authority not less than sixty (60) days previous to the date of the election.

(6) The provisions of this section shall not apply to municipal elections or to the election of the offices of justice of the Supreme Court, judge of the Court of Appeals, circuit judge, chancellor, county court judge, family court judge and justice court judge.

(7) Nothing in this section shall prohibit special elections to fill vacancies in either house of the Legislature from being held as provided in Section 23-15-851. In all elections conducted under the provisions of Section 23-15-851 the commissioner shall have printed on the ballot the name of any candidate who, not having been nominated by a political party, shall have been requested to be a candidate for any office by a petition filed with said commissioner by 5:00 p.m. not less than ten (10) working days prior to the election, and signed by not less than fifty (50) qualified electors.
The appropriate election commission shall determine whether each candidate is a qualified elector of the state, state district, county or county district they seek to serve, and whether each candidate meets all other qualifications to hold the office he is seeking or presents absolute proof that he will, subject to no contingencies, meet all qualifications on or before the date of the general or special election at which he could be elected to office. The election commission also shall determine whether any candidate has been convicted of any felony in a court of this state, or has been convicted on or after December 8, 1992, of any offense in another state which is a felony under the laws of this state, or has been convicted of any felony in a federal court on or after December 8, 1992. Excepted from the above are convictions of manslaughter and violations of the United States Internal Revenue Code or any violations of the tax laws of this state, unless the offense also involved misuse or abuse of his office or money coming into his hands by virtue of his office. If the appropriate election commission finds that a candidate either (a) is not a qualified elector, (b) does not meet all qualifications to hold the office he seeks and fails to provide absolute proof, subject to no contingencies, that he will meet the qualifications on or before the date of the general or special election at which he could be elected, or (c) has been convicted of a felony as described in this subsection, and not pardoned, then the name of such candidate shall not be placed upon the ballot.

If after the deadline to qualify as a candidate for an office or after the time for holding any party primary for an office, there shall be only one (1) person who has duly qualified to be a candidate for the office in the general election, the name of such person shall be placed on the ballot.

The petition required by this section may not be filed by using the internet.
SECTION 6. Section 23-15-973, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

23-15-973. It shall be the duty of the judges of the circuit court to give a reasonable time and opportunity to the candidates for the office of judge of the Supreme Court, judges of the Court of Appeals, circuit judge and chancellor to address the people during court terms. * * * Judicial offices as defined in Section 23-15-975 are not political but are to be held without favor and with absolute impartiality as to all persons, and because of the jurisdiction conferred upon the courts * * *, the judges serving in judicial offices as defined in Section 23-15-975 should be as far removed as possible from any political affiliations or obligations. It shall be unlawful for any candidate for any such judicial office to align himself with any candidate or candidates for any other office or with any political faction or any political party at any time during any * * * election campaign. Likewise it shall be unlawful for any candidate for any other office elected or to be elected at any * * * election, wherein any candidate for any of such judicial offices * * *, is or are to be elected, to align himself with any one or more of the candidates for said offices or to take any part whatever in any election for any one or more of such judicial offices, except to cast his individual vote. The election of any candidate for any office * * * at any election wherein a candidate for any one of such judicial offices * * * is to be elected who shall deliberately, knowingly and willfully violate the provisions of this section * * * shall be void.

SECTION 7. Section 23-15-977, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

23-15-977. (1) All candidates for judicial office as defined in Section 23-15-975 of this subarticle shall file their intent to be a candidate with the proper officials not later than 5:00 p.m. on the first Friday after the first Monday in May prior to election.
to the general election for judicial office and shall pay to the
proper officials the following amounts:

(a) Candidates for Supreme Court judge and Court of
Appeals, the sum of Two Hundred Dollars ($200.00).

(b) Candidates for circuit judge and chancellor, the
sum of One Hundred Dollars ($100.00).

(c) Candidates for county judge, family court judge and
county clerk, the sum of Fifteen Dollars ($15.00).

(2) Candidates for judicial offices listed in paragraphs (a)
and (b) of subsection (1) of this section shall file their intent
to be a candidate with, and pay the proper assessment made
pursuant to subsection (1) of this section to, the State Board of
Election Commissioners.

(3) Candidates for judicial offices listed in paragraph (c)
of subsection (1) of this section shall file their intent to be a
candidate with, and pay the proper assessment made pursuant to
subsection (1) of this section to, the circuit clerk of the proper
county. The circuit clerk shall notify the county commissioners
of election of all persons who have filed their intent to be a
candidate filed with, and paid the proper assessment to, such
clerk. Such notification shall occur within two (2) business days
and shall contain all necessary information.

SECTION 8. The Attorney General of the State of Mississippi
shall submit this act, immediately upon approval by the Governor,
or upon approval by the Legislature subsequent to a veto, to the
Attorney General of the United States or to the United States
District Court for the District of Columbia in accordance with the
provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended and
extended.

SECTION 9. Section 1 of this act shall take effect and be in
force from and after the date it is effectuated under Section 5 of
the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended and extended. The
remainder of this act shall take effect and be in force from and
after July 1, 2004, if it is effectuated under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended and extended.