SENATE BILL NO. 2612

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 23-15-213, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO PROVIDE THAT ELECTIONS FOR THE OFFICE OF COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSIONER SHALL BE NONPARTISAN; TO PROHIBIT POLITICAL PARTIES FROM FUND-RAISING ON BEHALF OF A CANDIDATE FOR COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSIONER; TO PROHIBIT POLITICAL PARTIES FROM MAKING CONTRIBUTIONS TO AND PUBLICLY ENDORSING CANDIDATES FOR COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSIONER; TO PROHIBIT CANDIDATES FOR COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSIONER FROM ACCEPTING A CONTRIBUTION FROM A POLITICAL PARTY; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. Section 23-15-213, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

23-15-213. (1) At the general election in 1984 and every four (4) years thereafter there shall be elected five (5) commissioners of election for each county whose terms of office shall commence on the first Monday of January following their election and who shall serve for a term of four (4) years. Each of the commissioners, before acting, shall take and subscribe the oath of office prescribed by the Constitution and file the same in the office of the clerk of the chancery court, there to remain. While engaged in their duties, the commissioners shall be conservators of the peace in the county, with all the duties and powers of such.

(2) The qualified electors of each supervisors district shall elect, at the general election in 1984 and every four (4) years thereafter, in their district one (1) commissioner of election. No more than one (1) commissioner shall be a resident of and reside in each supervisors district of the county; it being the purpose of this section that the county board of election
commissioners shall consist of one (1) person from each supervisors district of the county and that each such commissioner be elected from the supervisors district in which he resides.

(3) Candidates for county election commissioner shall qualify by filing with the clerk of the board of supervisors of their respective counties a petition personally signed by not less than fifty (50) qualified electors of the supervisors district in which they reside, requesting that they be a candidate, by 5:00 p.m. not less than sixty (60) days before the election and unless such petition is filed within said time, their names shall not be placed upon the ballot. * * *

The petition shall have attached thereto a certificate of the registrar showing the number of qualified electors on each petition, which shall be furnished by the registrar on request. The board shall determine the sufficiency of the petition, and if the same shall contain the required number of signatures and be filed within the time required, the president of the board shall verify that such candidate is a resident of the supervisors district in which he seeks election and that such candidate is otherwise qualified as provided by law, and shall certify the same to the chairman or secretary of the county election commission and the names of the candidates shall be placed upon the ballot for the ensuing election. No county election commissioner shall serve or be considered as elected unless and until he has received a majority of the votes cast for the position or post for which he is a candidate. If such majority vote is not received in the first election, then the two (2) candidates receiving the most votes for each position or post shall be placed upon the ballot for a second election to be held two (2) weeks later in accordance with appropriate procedures followed in other elections involving runoff candidates.

(4) (a) The office of county election commissioner is a nonpartisan office and a candidate for election thereto is
prohibited from campaigning or qualifying for such an office based
on party affiliation.

(b) In order to ensure that campaigns for county
election commissioner remain nonpartisan and without any
connection to a political party, political parties and any
committee or political committee affiliated with a political party
shall not:

(i) Engage in fund-raising on behalf of a
candidate for the office of county election commissioner;

(ii) Make any contribution to a candidate or
county election commissioner or the political committee of a
candidate for county election commissioner;

(iii) Publicly endorse any candidate for county
election commissioner.

(c) No candidate or political committee for a candidate
for county election commissioner shall accept a contribution from
a political party or any committee or political committee
affiliated with a political party.

(5) Upon taking office, the county board of election
commissioners shall organize by electing a chairman and a
secretary.

(6) It shall be the duty of the chairman to have the
official ballot printed and distributed at each general or special
election.

SECTION 3. 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 4. 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.