SENATE BILL NO. 2664

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A STUDY COMMITTEE ON CREATING A MISSISSIPPI HELPING OUTSTANDING PUPILS EDUCATIONALLY (MHOPE) SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM; TO DIRECT THE STUDY COMMITTEE TO SUBMIT A WRITTEN REPORT OF ITS FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LEGISLATURE BEFORE DECEMBER 1, 2001; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. (1) There is established a study committee on creating a Mississippi Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally (MHOPE) scholarship program to study and make recommendations to the Legislature on the establishment and implementation of a program of free college tuition in the State of Mississippi for highly achieving Mississippi students. The committee shall make a report of its findings and recommendations to the Legislature before December 1, 2001.

(2) The committee shall examine the Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally (HOPE) scholarship program in the State of Georgia and similar programs that have been implemented in other states in order to gain a full understanding of such programs. In its report to the Legislature, the committee shall include recommended modifications, if any, which should be made to the Georgia HOPE program for MHOPE and suggestions on the possible integration of currently existing scholarship and tuition assistance programs in Mississippi with MHOPE. The report must include a fiscal note on the projected costs of MHOPE, and the committee shall identify possible revenue streams for funding the program.

(3) The study committee shall be composed of the following twenty-three (23) members:
(a) The Chairmen of the House Universities and Colleges, Education and Appropriations Committees;
(b) Two (2) members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House, or their designees from the House membership;
(c) The Chairmen of the Senate Universities and Colleges, Education and Appropriations Committees;
(d) Two (2) members of the Senate appointed by the Lieutenant Governor, or their designees from the Senate membership;
(e) The Governor or his designee;
(f) The Commissioner of Higher Education or his designee;
(g) The Executive Director of the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges or his designee;
(h) The State Superintendent of Public Education or his designee;
(i) The President of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning or his designee from the board;
(j) The President of State Board for Community and Junior Colleges or his designee from the board;
(k) The State Treasurer or his designee;
(l) The president or chancellor of one (1) of the three state institutions of higher learning having the highest student enrollment in the state, appointed by the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning;
(m) The president of one (1) of the historically black state institutions of higher learning in the state, appointed by the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning;
(n) The president of one (1) of the three (3) state institutions of higher learning having the lowest student enrollment in the state, appointed by the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning;
(o) The president of a public community or junior college in this state, appointed by the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges;

(p) A president of an accredited, private four-year institution of higher learning in the state, appointed by the membership of any association representing such institutions in the state; and

(q) A representative of a local district of Rotary International or his designee.

In making their legislative appointments, the Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the House shall endeavor to achieve a diverse representation, with all geographical areas of the state being represented on the committee.

(4) If any chairman of a legislative committee serving on the study committee is unable to attend any meeting of the committee, the vice chairman of the respective committee may attend and vote at such meeting. Appointments shall be made within thirty (30) days after passage of this act. Within fifteen (15) days thereafter, on a day to be designated jointly by the Speaker of the House and the Lieutenant Governor, the study committee shall meet and organize by selecting from its membership a chairman and vice chairman. The vice chairman shall serve as secretary and shall be responsible for keeping all records of the study committee. A majority of the members of the study committee shall constitute a quorum. In the selection of its officers and the adoption of rules, resolutions and reports, an affirmative vote of a majority of the study committee is required. All members shall be notified in writing of all meetings, and such notices must be mailed at least five (5) days before the date on which a meeting is to be held.

(5) Subject to the availability of funds, for attending meetings of the study committee, members who are not legislators shall be compensated at the per diem rate authorized by Section
25-3-69, Mississippi Code of 1972, and shall be reimbursed in accordance with Section 25-3-41, Mississippi Code of 1972, for mileage and actual expenses incurred in attending meetings of the committee. Each legislative member of the committee shall be paid from the contingent expense fund of his respective house per diem in the amount authorized by Section 25-3-69, Mississippi Code of 1972, and a mileage allowance and an expense allowance in the amount authorized by Section 5-1-47, Mississippi Code of 1972. However, no per diem, mileage allowance or expense allowance may be paid for attending meetings of the committee while the Legislature is in session, and no per diem, mileage allowance or expense allowance may be paid without prior approval of the proper committee in the member's respective house. Any member who is also a state employee shall not be eligible to receive per diem compensation. No study committee member may incur per diem, travel or other expenses unless previously authorized by vote, at a meeting of the study committee, which action must be recorded in the official minutes of the meeting. Nonlegislative members may be paid from any funds made available to the study committee for that purpose.

(6) The study committee may employ consultants or staff and may utilize clerical and legal staff employed by the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning, the Office of the Governor, the Legislature and any other staff assistance made available to the committee.

(7) Funding for the study committee may be provided from any funds that may be appropriated by the Legislature for the expenses of the study committee. The study committee may accept money from any source, public or private, to be expended in implementing its duties under this act.

(8) Upon presentation of its report to the Legislature before the 2002 Regular Session, the study committee shall be dissolved.

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SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.