

By: Senator(s) Tollison

To: Judiciary

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE  
FOR  
SENATE BILL NO. 2911

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 99-15-18, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,  
2 TO REVISE THE MANNER OF PAYMENT OF EXPENSES OF DEFENSE COUNSEL; TO  
3 AMEND SECTION 99-39-103, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO REVISE THE  
4 NUMBER AND QUALIFICATIONS OF THE PERSONNEL OF THE OFFICE; AND FOR  
5 RELATED PURPOSES.

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

7 SECTION 1. Section 99-15-18, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
8 amended as follows:

9 99-15-18. (1) Counsel employed by an office funded by the  
10 State of Mississippi or any county shall receive no compensation  
11 or expenses for representation of a party seeking post-conviction  
12 relief while under a sentence of death other than the compensation  
13 attendant to his office.

14 (2) Unless employed by such an office, counsel appointed to  
15 represent a party seeking post-conviction relief while under a  
16 sentence of death shall be paid at an hourly rate not to exceed  
17 eighty percent (80%) of the hourly rate allowed in the United  
18 States District Courts of the Northern and Southern Districts of  
19 Mississippi to attorneys appointed to represent defendants seeking  
20 habeas corpus relief. \* \* \*

21 (3) Counsel shall submit to the trial court, once each  
22 month, an interim invoice. Compensation earned and reimbursable  
23 expenses incurred each month shall be claimed on an interim  
24 invoice submitted not later than the fifteenth day of the  
25 following month, or the first business day thereafter. All  
26 interim vouchers shall be supported by detailed and itemized time  
27 and expense statements. The trial court shall review the interim  
28 invoices when submitted and will authorize compensation to be paid



29 for seventy-five percent (75%) of the approved number of hours.  
30 The court shall also authorize for payment all reimbursable  
31 expenses, including fees and expenses of experts and of  
32 investigators, reasonably incurred. At the conclusion of the  
33 state-paid post-conviction representation, counsel shall submit a  
34 final voucher seeking payment for representation provided during  
35 the final interim period. The final invoice shall also set forth  
36 in detail the time and expenses claimed for the entire case,  
37 including all documentation. Counsel shall reflect all  
38 compensation and reimbursement previously received on the  
39 appropriate line of the final invoice. Upon review and approval  
40 of the final invoice, the trial court shall authorize compensation  
41 to be paid for the approved number of hours provided during the  
42 final interim period, for all reasonable expenses reasonably  
43 incurred during the final interim period, and for the withheld  
44 twenty-five percent (25%) of hours approved in prior interim  
45 periods.

46 (4) All interim invoices will be maintained under seal  
47 during the pendency of state post-conviction proceedings. Upon  
48 submission by defendant's counsel of a final invoice, the trial  
49 court shall unseal the interim invoices unless the trial court  
50 determines that petitioner's interest requires a limited  
51 disclosure. In determining whether limited disclosure is  
52 appropriate, the trial court shall consider the need: (a) to  
53 protect the petitioner's Fifth Amendment right against  
54 self-incrimination; (b) to protect the petitioner's Sixth  
55 Amendment right to effective assistance of counsel; (c) the  
56 petitioner's attorney-client privilege; (d) the work product  
57 privilege of the petitioner's counsel; (e) the safety of any  
58 person; (f) whether petitioner intends to seek federal habeas  
59 corpus relief; and (g) any other interest that justice may  
60 require.



61       (5) Prior to payment of any fees in a case in excess of  
62 Seven Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$7,500.00) or expenses of  
63 investigation and experts in excess of Two Thousand Five Hundred  
64 Dollars (\$2,500.00), the application for such fees and expenses  
65 will be submitted to the Supreme Court for review of the award of  
66 the convicting court. If counsel believes that the court has  
67 failed to allow reasonable compensation, counsel may petition the  
68 Supreme Court for review. If counsel is appointed in successive  
69 post-conviction proceedings, such counsel shall receive reasonable  
70 compensation considering the services performed.

71       (6) The trial court shall also, upon petition by the party  
72 seeking post-conviction relief, authorize additional monies to pay  
73 for investigative and expert services that are reasonably  
74 necessary to adequately litigate the post-conviction claims. The  
75 initial petition for such expenses shall present a credible  
76 estimate of anticipated expenses, and such estimate shall be  
77 updated from time to time as needed to inform the court of the  
78 status of such expenses. Payment of such expenses shall be made  
79 from funds in the Special Capital Post-Conviction Counsel Fund.

80       SECTION 2. Section 99-39-103, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
81 amended as follows:

82       99-39-103. There is created the Mississippi Office of  
83 Capital Post-Conviction Counsel. This office shall consist of a  
84 minimum of three (3), not to exceed five (5), attorneys, a minimum  
85 of one (1), not to exceed three (3), investigators, one (1) fiscal  
86 officer and a minimum of one (1), not to exceed two (2),  
87 secretaries/paralegals. One of the attorneys shall serve as  
88 director of the office. The director shall be appointed by the  
89 Chief Justice of the Supreme Court with the approval of a majority  
90 of the justices voting, for a term of four (4) years, or until a  
91 successor takes office. The remaining attorneys and other staff  
92 shall be appointed by the director of the office and shall serve  
93 at the will and pleasure of the director. The director and all



94 other attorneys in the office shall either be active members of  
95 The Mississippi Bar, or, if a member in good standing of the bar  
96 of another jurisdiction, must apply to and secure admission to The  
97 Mississippi Bar within twelve (12) months of the commencement of  
98 the person's employment by the office. At least three (3) of the  
99 attorneys in the office shall meet all qualifications necessary to  
100 serve as post-conviction counsel for persons under a sentence of  
101 death. The director may be removed from office by the Chief  
102 Justice upon finding that the director is not qualified under law  
103 to serve as post-conviction counsel for persons under sentences of  
104 death, has failed to perform the duties of the office or has acted  
105 beyond the scope of the authority granted by law for the office.

106 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect and be in force from  
107 and after July 1, 2001.

