HOUSE BILL NO. 965

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 69-2-13, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO INCREASE TO $24,000,000.00, THE AMOUNT OF MONEY THAT MAY BE DRAWN FROM THE EMERGING CROPS FUND BY THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY TO ASSIST IN PROVIDING FINANCING FOR MINORITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT; TO PROVIDE THAT THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY SHALL MAKE LOANS FROM THE EMERGING CROPS FUND TO PRODUCERS OF SWEET POTATOES AND COOPERATIVES OWNED BY SWEET POTATO PRODUCERS TO ASSIST IN THE PLANTING OF SWEET POTATOES AND THE PURCHASE OF SWEET POTATO PRODUCTION AND HARVESTING EQUIPMENT; TO AMEND SECTION 69-2-19, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO INCREASE TO $103,000,000.00, THE AMOUNT OF BONDS THAT MAY BE ISSUED TO PROVIDE FUNDS FOR THE EMERGING CROPS FUND; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. Section 69-2-13, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

69-2-13. (1) There is hereby established in the State Treasury a fund to be known as the "Emerging Crops Fund," which shall be used to pay the interest on loans made to farmers for nonland capital costs of establishing production of emerging crops on land in Mississippi, and to make loans and grants which are authorized under this section to be made from the fund. The fund shall be administered by the Mississippi Development Authority. A board comprised of the directors of the authority, the Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service, the Mississippi Small Farm Development Center and the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, or their designees, shall develop definitions, guidelines and procedures for the implementation of this chapter. Funds for the Emerging Crops Fund shall be provided from the issuance of bonds or notes under Sections 69-2-19 through 69-2-37 and from repayment of interest loans made from the fund.

(2) (a) The Mississippi Development Authority shall develop a program which gives fair consideration to making loans for the
processing and manufacturing of goods and services by agribusiness, greenhouse production horticulture, and small business concerns. It is the policy of the State of Mississippi that the Mississippi Development Authority shall give due recognition to and shall aid, counsel, assist and protect, insofar as is possible, the interests of agribusiness, greenhouse production horticulture, and small business concerns. To ensure that the purposes of this subsection are carried out, the Mississippi Development Authority shall loan not more than One Million Dollars ($1,000,000.00) to finance any single agribusiness, greenhouse production horticulture, or small business concern. Loans made pursuant to this subsection shall be made in accordance with the criteria established in Section 57-71-11.

(b) The Mississippi Development Authority may, out of the total amount of bonds authorized to be issued under this chapter, make available funds to any planning and development district in accordance with the criteria established in Section 57-71-11. Planning and development districts which receive monies pursuant to this provision shall use such monies to make loans to private companies for purposes consistent with this subsection.

(c) The Mississippi Development Authority is hereby authorized to engage legal services, financial advisors, appraisers and consultants if needed to review and close loans made hereunder and to establish and assess reasonable fees including, but not limited to, liquidation expenses.

(3) The Mississippi Development Authority shall, in addition to the other programs described in this section, provide for a program of loans to be made to agribusiness or greenhouse production horticulture enterprises for the purpose of encouraging thereby the extension of conventional financing and the issuance of letters of credit to such agribusiness or greenhouse production horticulture enterprises by private institutions. Monies to make
such loans by the Mississippi Development Authority shall be drawn
from the Emerging Crops Fund. The amount of a loan to any single
agribusiness or greenhouse production horticulture enterprise
shall not exceed twenty percent (20%) of the total cost of the
project for which financing is sought or Two Hundred Thousand
Dollars ($200,000.00), whichever is less. No interest shall be
charged on such loans, and only the amount actually loaned shall
be required to be repaid. Repayments shall be deposited into the
Emerging Crops Fund.

(4) (a) Through June 30, 2003, the Mississippi Development
Authority may loan or grant to qualified planning and development
districts, and to small business investment corporations,
bank-based community development corporations, the Recruitment and
Training Program, Inc., the City of Jackson Business Development
Loan Fund, the Lorman Southwest Mississippi Development
Corporation, the West Jackson Community Development Corporation,
the East Mississippi Development Corporation, and other entities
meeting the criteria established by the Mississippi Development
Authority (all referred to hereinafter as "qualified entities"),
funds for the purpose of establishing loan revolving funds to
assist in providing financing for minority economic development.
The monies loaned or granted by the Mississippi Development
Authority shall be drawn from the Emerging Crops Fund and shall
not exceed Twenty-four Million Dollars ($24,000,000.00) in the
aggregate. Planning and development districts or qualified
entities which receive monies pursuant to this provision shall use
such monies to make loans to minority business enterprises
consistent with criteria established by the Mississippi
Development Authority. Such criteria shall include, at a minimum,
the following:

(i) The business enterprise must be a private,
for-profit enterprise.
(ii) If the business enterprise is a proprietorship, the borrower must be a resident citizen of the State of Mississippi; if the business enterprise is a corporation or partnership, at least fifty percent (50%) of the owners must be resident citizens of the State of Mississippi.

(iii) The borrower must have at least five percent (5%) equity interest in the business enterprise.

(iv) The borrower must demonstrate ability to repay the loan.

(v) The borrower must not be in default of any previous loan from the state or federal government.

(vi) Loan proceeds may be used for financing all project costs associated with development or expansion of a new small business, including fixed assets, working capital, start-up costs, rental payments, interest expense during construction and professional fees related to the project.

(vii) Loan proceeds shall not be used to pay off existing debt for loan consolidation purposes; to finance the acquisition, construction, improvement or operation of real property which is to be held primarily for sale or investment; to provide for, or free funds, for speculation in any kind of property; or as a loan to owners, partners or stockholders of the applicant which do not change ownership interest by the applicant. However, this does not apply to ordinary compensation for services rendered in the course of business.

(viii) The maximum amount that may be loaned to any one (1) borrower shall be Two Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars ($250,000.00).

(ix) The Mississippi Development Authority shall review each loan before it is made, and no loan shall be made to any borrower until the loan has been reviewed and approved by the Mississippi Development Authority.
(b) For the purpose of this subsection, the term "minority business enterprise" means a socially and economically disadvantaged small business concern, organized for profit, performing a commercially useful function which is owned and controlled by one or more minorities or minority business enterprises certified by the Mississippi Development Authority, at least fifty percent (50%) of whom are resident citizens of the State of Mississippi. For purposes of this subsection, the term "socially and economically disadvantaged small business concern" shall have the meaning ascribed to such term under the Small Business Act (15 USCS, Section 637(a)), or women, and the term "owned and controlled" means a business in which one or more minorities or minority business enterprises certified by the Mississippi Development Authority own sixty percent (60%) or, in the case of a corporation, sixty percent (60%) of the voting stock, and control sixty percent (60%) of the management and daily business operations of the business.

From and after July 1, 2003, monies not loaned or granted by the Mississippi Development Authority to planning and development districts or qualified entities under this subsection, and monies not loaned by planning and development districts or qualified entities, shall be deposited to the credit of the sinking fund created and maintained in the State Treasury for the retirement of bonds issued under Section 69-2-19.

(c) Notwithstanding any other provision of this subsection to the contrary, if federal funds are not available for commitments made by a planning and development district to provide assistance under any federal loan program administered by the planning and development district in coordination with the Appalachian Regional Commission or Economic Development Administration, or both, a planning and development district may use funds in its loan revolving fund, which have not been committed otherwise to provide assistance, for the purpose of
providing temporary funding for such commitments. If a planning and development district uses uncommitted funds in its loan revolving fund to provide such temporary funding, the district shall use funds repaid to the district under the temporarily funded federal loan program to replenish the funds used to provide the temporary funding. Funds used by a planning and development district to provide temporary funding under this paragraph (c) must be repaid to the district's loan revolving fund no later than twelve (12) months after the date the district provides the temporary funding. A planning and development district may not use uncommitted funds in its loan revolving fund to provide temporary funding under this paragraph (c) on more than two (2) occasions during a calendar year. A planning and development district may provide temporary funding for multiple commitments on each such occasion. The maximum aggregate amount of uncommitted funds in a loan revolving fund that may be used for such purposes during a calendar year shall not exceed seventy percent (70%) of the uncommitted funds in the loan revolving fund on the date the district first provides temporary funding during the calendar year.

(d) If the Mississippi Development Authority determines that a planning and development district or qualified entity has provided loans to minority businesses in a manner inconsistent with the provisions of this subsection, then the amount of such loans so provided shall be withheld by the Mississippi Development Authority from any additional grant funds to which the planning and development district or qualified entity becomes entitled under this subsection. If the Mississippi Development Authority determines, after notifying such planning and development district or qualified entity twice in writing and providing such planning and development district or qualified entity a reasonable opportunity to comply, that a planning and development district or qualified entity has consistently failed to comply with this...
subsection, the Mississippi Development Authority may declare such
planning and development district or qualified entity in default
under this subsection and, upon receipt of notice thereof from the
Mississippi Development Authority, such planning and development
district or qualified entity shall immediately cease providing
loans under this subsection, shall refund to the Mississippi
Development Authority for distribution to other planning and
development districts or qualified entities all funds held in its
revolving loan fund and, if required by the Mississippi
Development Authority, shall convey to the Mississippi Development
Authority, all administrative and management control of loans
provided by it under this subsection.

(e) If the Mississippi Development Authority
determines, after notifying a planning and development district or
qualified entity twice in writing and providing copies of such
notification to each member of the Legislature in whose district
or in a part of whose district such planning and development
district or qualified entity is located and providing such
planning and development district or qualified entity a reasonable
opportunity to take corrective action, that a planning and
development district or qualified entity administering a revolving
loan fund under the provisions of this subsection is not actively
engaged in lending as defined by the rules and regulations of the
Mississippi Development Authority, the Mississippi Development
Authority may declare such planning and development district or
qualified entity in default under this subsection and, upon
receipt of notice thereof from the Mississippi Development
Authority, such planning and development district or qualified
entity shall immediately cease providing loans under this
subsection, shall refund to the Mississippi Development Authority
for distribution to other planning and development districts or
qualified entities all funds held in its revolving loan fund and,
if required by the Mississippi Development Authority, shall convey
to the Mississippi Development Authority all administrative and management control of loans provided by it under this subsection.

(5) The Mississippi Development Authority shall develop a program which will assist minority business enterprises by guaranteeing bid, performance and payment bonds which such minority businesses are required to obtain in order to contract with federal agencies, state agencies or political subdivisions of the state. Monies for such program shall be drawn from the monies allocated under subsection (4) of this section to assist the financing of minority economic development and shall not exceed Three Million Dollars ($3,000,000.00) in the aggregate. The Mississippi Development Authority may promulgate rules and regulations for the operation of the program established pursuant to this subsection. For the purpose of this subsection (5) the term "minority business enterprise" has the meaning assigned such term in subsection (4) of this section.

(6) The Mississippi Development Authority may loan or grant to public entities and to nonprofit corporations funds to defray the expense of financing (or to match any funds available from other public or private sources for the expense of financing) projects in this state which are devoted to the study, teaching and/or promotion of regional crafts and which are deemed by the authority to be significant tourist attractions. The monies loaned or granted shall be drawn from the Emerging Crops Fund and shall not exceed Two Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars ($250,000.00) in the aggregate.

(7) Through June 30, 1998, the Mississippi Development Authority shall make available to the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce funds for the purpose of establishing loan revolving funds and other methods of financing for agribusiness programs administered under the Mississippi Agribusiness Council Act of 1993. The monies made available by the Mississippi Development Authority shall be drawn from the
Emerging Crops Fund and shall not exceed Seven Hundred Thousand Dollars ($700,000.00) in the aggregate. The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce shall establish control and auditing procedures for use of these funds. These funds will be used primarily for quick payment to farmers for vegetable and fruit crops processed and sold through vegetable processing plants associated with the Department of Agriculture and Commerce and the Mississippi State Extension Service.

(8) From and after July 1, 1996, the Mississippi Development Authority shall make available to the Mississippi Small Farm Development Center One Million Dollars ($1,000,000.00) to be used by the center to assist small entrepreneurs as provided in Section 37-101-25, Mississippi Code of 1972. The monies made available by the Mississippi Development Authority shall be drawn from the Emerging Crops Fund.

(9) The Mississippi Development Authority shall make available to the Agribusiness and Natural Resource Development Center through Alcorn State University an amount not to exceed Two Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars ($250,000.00) in Fiscal Year 2001 and Two Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars ($250,000.00) in Fiscal Year 2002 from the cash balance of the Emerging Crops Fund to support the development of a cooperative program for agribusiness development, marketing and natural resources development. This subsection (9) shall stand repealed on June 30, 2002.

(10) The Mississippi Development Authority shall make available to the Small Farm Development Center at Alcorn State University funds in an aggregate amount not to exceed Three Hundred Thousand Dollars ($300,000.00), to be drawn from the cash balance of the Emerging Crops Fund. The Small Farm Development Center at Alcorn State University shall use such funds to make loans to producers of sweet potatoes and cooperatives anywhere in the State of Mississippi owned by sweet potato producers to assist in the planting of sweet potatoes and the purchase of sweet potato
production and harvesting equipment. A report of the loans made
under this subsection shall be furnished by January 15 of each
year to the Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee and the
Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee.
(11) The Mississippi Development Authority shall make
available to the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and
Commerce "Make Mississippi Mine" program an amount not to exceed
One Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars ($150,000.00) to be drawn from
the cash balance of the Emerging Crops Fund.
(12) The Mississippi Development Authority shall make loans
to producers of sweet potatoes and cooperatives owned by sweet
potato producers to assist in the planting of sweet potatoes and
the purchase of sweet potato production and harvesting equipment.
The monies loaned by the Mississippi Business Finance Corporation
shall be drawn from the Emerging Crops Fund and shall not exceed
One Million Dollars ($1,000,000.00) in the aggregate.

SECTION 2. Section 69-2-19, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
amended as follows:

69-2-19. The Mississippi Development Authority is
authorized, at one (1) time or from time to time, to declare by
resolution the necessity for issuance of negotiable general
obligation bonds of the State of Mississippi to provide funds for
the Emerging Crops Fund established in Section 69-2-13. Upon the
adoption of a resolution by the board, declaring the necessity for
the issuance of any part or all of the general obligation bonds
authorized by Sections 69-2-19 through 69-2-39, the authority
shall deliver a certified copy of its resolution or resolutions to
the State Bond Commission. Upon receipt of same, the State Bond
Commission, in its discretion, shall act as the issuing agent,
prescribe the form of the bonds, advertise for and accept bids,
issue and sell the bonds so authorized to be sold, and do any and
all other things necessary and advisable in connection with the
issuance and sale of such bonds. The amount of bonds issued under
Sections 69-2-19 through 69-2-39 shall not exceed One Hundred Three Million Dollars ($103,000,000.00) in the aggregate. No bonds may be issued under Sections 69-2-19 through 69-2-39 after October 1, 2003.

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.