HOUSE BILL NO. 1274

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 25-15-103, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO PROVIDE THAT CERTAIN RETIRED EMPLOYEES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS MAY ELECT TO JOIN THE STATE EMPLOYEES LIFE AND HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN IN THE SAME MANNER AS PROVIDED FOR RETIRED STATE EMPLOYEES; TO AMEND SECTION 25-15-14, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO PROVIDE THAT CERTAIN ELECTED STATE, DISTRICT OR COUNTY OFFICIALS MAY PARTICIPATE IN THE STATE EMPLOYEES LIFE AND HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN; TO AMEND SECTION 25-15-3, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO REVISE DEFINITIONS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. Section 25-15-3, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

25-15-3. For the purposes of this article, the words and phrases used herein shall have the following meanings:

(a) "Employee" means a person who works full time for the State of Mississippi and receives his compensation in a direct payment from a department, agency or institution of the state government and any person who works full time for any school district, community/junior college, public library or university-based program authorized under Section 37-23-31 for deaf, aphasic and emotionally disturbed children or any regular nonstudent bus driver. This shall include legislators, employees of the legislative branch and the judicial branch of the state and "employees" shall include full-time salaried judges and full-time district attorneys and their staff and full-time compulsory school attendance officers. For the purposes of this article, any "employee" making contributions to the State of Mississippi retirement plan shall be considered a full-time employee.

(b) "Department" means the Department of Finance and Administration.
(c) "Plan" means the State and School Employees Life and Health Insurance Plan created under this article.

(d) "Fund" means the State and School Employees Insurance Fund set up under this article.

(e) "Retired employee" means any person who is retired and is receiving a retirement allowance under the Public Employees' Retirement System, including a retired employee of a local institution, department or agency as provided in Section 25-15-103. The term "retired employee" includes an elected state, district or county official as provided in Section 25-15-14, as amended in House Bill No. , 2002 Regular Session.

(f) "Board" means the State and School Employees Health Insurance Management Board created under Section 25-15-303.

SECTION 2. Section 25-15-103, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

25-15-103. The maximum amount of group insurance or other coverage used in determining employer's limitation of one hundred percent (100%) of such costs shall be determined by regulations promulgated by the governing board or head of any political subdivision, school district, junior college district, institution, department or agency named in Sections 25-15-101 and 25-15-103, but the life insurance for each employee shall not exceed Fifty Thousand Dollars ($50,000.00), or the amount of deduction allowed by the United States Internal Revenue Service in filing a federal tax return, whichever is greater. A like amount may be for accidental death; accident, health and salary protection insurance, providing benefits not exceeding sixty percent (60%) of the employee's income, or the amount allowed by the United States Internal Revenue Service in filing a federal tax return, whichever is greater. Hospitalization benefits for room and board may not exceed the average semiprivate cost per day; and the other coverages authorized hereinabove. The limitations in this paragraph on the amount of group insurance and other coverage
which employers may obtain for their employees shall not be applicable to municipalities.

Any employee who retires due to one hundred percent (100%) medical disability, or due to reaching the statutory age of retirement under the provisions of the Public Employees' Retirement Law of 1952, being Sections 25-11-101 through 25-11-139, may, if he elects, remain a member of the group plan for such life insurance and other benefits as may be agreed to by the governing board or institution, department, or agency head and the companies writing such insurance and other coverage, by paying the entire costs thereof. Any such employee who retires after July 1, 2002, may elect to join the State Employees Life and Health Insurance Plan under the same conditions and coverages as provided for retired employees under Sections 25-15-9 and 25-15-15.

When any of the political subdivisions, school districts, junior college districts, institutions, departments, or agencies named in Sections 25-15-101 and 25-15-103 have adopted the group coverage plan authorized by these sections, any of the employees thereof participating in the plan who desire to secure additional benefits for their dependents with the company or companies providing such group coverage may do so by authorizing in writing the deduction from his or her salary or wages of the necessary amounts for the full payment of such additional coverage, and the same may be deducted and paid for such purposes, but the entire cost of such additional coverage for dependents shall be paid by the employee.

The municipality may provide group life insurance coverage for all or specified groups of its public employees and group hospitalization benefits for such public employees and their dependents, and the municipality may pay the total of the cost of all benefits under this section.
SECTION 3. Section 25-15-14, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

25-15-14. Any elected state or district official who does not run for reelection or who is defeated before being entitled to receive a retirement allowance shall be eligible to continue to participate in the State and School Employees Health Insurance Plan under the same conditions and coverages for retired employees. Any elected state, district or county official who does not run for reelection after July 1, 2002, or who is defeated before being entitled to receive a retirement allowance after July 1, 2002, shall be eligible to participate in the State Employees Life and Health Insurance Plan under the same conditions and coverages for retired employees.

SECTION 4. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2002.