AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 19-5-177, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO AUTHORIZE PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICTS TO PROVIDE GROUP LIFE INSURANCE COVERAGE AND HOSPITALIZATION BENEFITS FOR THEIR EMPLOYEES; TO AMEND SECTION 19-5-171, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO INCREASE THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF MEETINGS FOR WHICH PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS MAY BE COMPENSATED; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. Section 19-5-177, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

19-5-177. (1) Any district created under Sections 19-5-151 through 19-5-207, acting by and through the board of commissioners of such district as its governing authority, shall have the following, among other, powers:

(a) To sue and be sued;

(b) To acquire by purchase, gift, devise and lease or any other mode of acquisition, other than by eminent domain, hold and dispose of real and personal property of every kind within or without the district;

(c) To make and enter into contracts, conveyances, mortgages, deeds of trust, bonds, leases or contracts for financial advisory services;

(d) To incur debts, to borrow money, to issue negotiable bonds, and to provide for the rights of the holders thereof;

(e) To fix, maintain, collect and revise rates and charges for services rendered by or through the facilities of such district, which rates and charges shall not be subject to review or regulation by the Mississippi Public Service Commission except
in those instances where a city operating similar services would
be subject to regulation and review; however, the district may
furnish services, including connection to the facilities of the
district, free of charge to the county or any agency or department
of the county and to volunteer fire departments located within the
service area of the district. The district shall obtain a
certificate of convenience and necessity from the Mississippi
Public Service Commission for operating of water and/or sewer
systems;

(f) To pledge all or any part of its revenues to the
payment of its obligations;

(g) To make such covenants in connection with the
issuance of bonds or to secure the payment of bonds that a private
business corporation can make under the general laws of the state;

(h) To use any right-of-way, public right-of-way,
easement, or other similar property or property rights necessary
or convenient in connection with the acquisition, improvement,
operation or maintenance of the facilities of such district held
by the state or any political subdivision thereof; however, the
governing body of such political subdivision shall consent to such
use;

(i) To enter into agreements with state and federal
agencies for loans, grants, grants-in-aid, and other forms of
assistance including, but not limited to, participation in the
sale and purchase of bonds;

(j) To acquire by purchase any existing works and
facilities providing services for which it was created, and any
lands, rights, easements, franchises and other property, real and
personal necessary to the completion and operation of such system
upon such terms and conditions as may be agreed upon, and if
necessary as part of the purchase price to assume the payment of
outstanding notes, bonds or other obligations upon such system;
(k) To extend its services to areas beyond but within one (1) mile of the boundaries of such district; however, no such extension shall be made to areas already occupied by another corporate agency rendering the same service so long as such corporate agency desires to continue to serve such areas. Areas outside of the district desiring to be served which are beyond the one (1) mile limit must be brought into the district by annexation proceedings;

(l) To be deemed to have the same status as counties and municipalities with respect to payment of sales taxes on purchases made by such districts;

(m) To borrow funds for interim financing subject to receipt of funds as outlined in Section 19-5-181;

(n) To provide group life insurance coverage for all or specified groups of employees of the district and group hospitalization benefits for those employees and their dependents, and to pay the total cost of these benefits. For purposes of this paragraph, the term "employees" does not include any person who is a commissioner of a district created under Sections 19-5-151 through 19-5-207, and such commissioners are not eligible to receive any insurance coverage or benefits made available to district employees under this paragraph.

(2) Any district which is incorporated under Sections 19-5-151 through 19-5-207 to provide sewer services may install or provide for the installation of sewage holding tanks at residential properties within the district, if funding for municipal or community sewers has been awarded to the district. The district shall maintain or provide for the maintenance of the sewage holding tank systems. The district may assess and collect from each resident using a sewage holding tank a fee covering the costs of providing the services authorized under this section. When municipal or community sewers are available and ready for
use, residences with sewage holding tanks shall be connected to
the sewer system.

SECTION 2. Section 19-5-171, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
amended as follows:

19-5-171. (1) Every resident citizen of the county in which
is located any district created under Sections 19-5-151 through
19-5-207, of good reputation, being the owner of land or the
conductor of a business situated within the district and being
over twenty-five (25) years of age and of sound mind and judgment,
shall be eligible to hold the office of commissioner.

(2) Except as provided in Section 19-5-164(3), each person
appointed or elected as a commissioner, before entering upon the
discharge of the duties of the person's office, shall be required
to execute a bond payable to the State of Mississippi in the penal
sum of Ten Thousand Dollars ($10,000.00) conditioned that the
person will faithfully discharge the duties of the office. Each
bond shall be approved by the clerk of the board of supervisors
and filed with the clerk.

(3) Each commissioner shall take and subscribe to an oath of
office prescribed in Section 268, Mississippi Constitution of
1890, before the clerk of the board of supervisors that the person
will faithfully discharge the duties of the office of
commissioner, which oath shall also be filed with the clerk and
preserved with the official bond.

(4) The commissioners so appointed or elected and qualified
shall be compensated for their services for each meeting of the
board of commissioners attended, either regular or special, at a
rate to be fixed by the board of supervisors, not to exceed the
rate established in Section 25-3-69 for officers of state boards,
commissions and agencies, and shall be reimbursed for all expenses
necessarily incurred in the discharge of their official duties in
accordance with Section 25-3-41. However, in no one (1) calendar
year shall any commissioner be compensated for more than twenty-four (24) meetings.

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