

By: Senator(s) Robertson

To: Public Utilities

SENATE BILL NO. 2820

1 AN ACT TO REENACT SECTIONS 77-1-1 THROUGH 77-1-6, 77-1-11,  
2 77-1-15 THROUGH 77-1-21, 77-1-25 THROUGH 77-1-43, 77-1-47 AND  
3 77-1-49, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH CREATE THE PUBLIC SERVICE  
4 COMMISSION AND PRESCRIBE ITS POWERS AND DUTIES; TO AMEND SECTION  
5 77-1-51, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO EXTEND THE DATE OF REPEAL ON  
6 THOSE SECTIONS ESTABLISHING THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION; AND FOR  
7 RELATED PURPOSES.

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

9 **SECTION 1.** Section 77-1-1, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
10 reenacted as follows:

11 77-1-1. A public service commission, hereinafter referred to  
12 in this chapter as the commission, is hereby created, consisting  
13 of three (3) members, one (1) to be elected from each of the three  
14 (3) Supreme Court districts by the qualified electors of such  
15 district. Elections for such officers shall be held in the  
16 general election in November, 1959, and every four (4) years  
17 thereafter, and the terms of office of the three (3) commissioners  
18 elected at the general election in November, 1959, shall expire on  
19 December 31, 1963.

20 The commissioners shall each receive a yearly salary fixed by  
21 the Legislature, payable monthly.

22 The commissioners shall each possess the qualifications  
23 prescribed for the Secretary of State. The commissioners shall  
24 not operate, own any stock in, or be in the employment of any  
25 common or contract carrier by motor vehicle, telephone company,  
26 gas or electric utility company, or any other public utility that  
27 shall come under their jurisdiction or supervision.

28 **SECTION 2.** Section 77-1-3, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
29 reenacted as follows:



30           77-1-3. The commission shall have a seal, having around the  
31 margin the words "Mississippi Public Service Commission," and in  
32 the center such device as it may select. The acts of the  
33 commission shall be authenticated by its seal.

34           **SECTION 3.** Section 77-1-5, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
35 reenacted as follows:

36           77-1-5. The commission shall keep an office in the City of  
37 Jackson, which shall be kept open Monday through Friday of each  
38 week for eight (8) hours each day. The commission shall meet at  
39 its office on the first Tuesday of each month and at such other  
40 times and places as its duties may require. The commission may  
41 sit from day to day and from time to time, and any meeting may be  
42 pretermitted not exceeding two (2) in any year.

43           The members of the commission shall devote their entire time  
44 to the performance of their official duties on every business day,  
45 except on the legal holidays enumerated in Section 3-3-7,  
46 Mississippi Code of 1972. However, official acts of the  
47 commission done on legal holidays shall be valid.

48           The commission shall keep regular minutes of its proceedings,  
49 which shall be a public record, and all orders, findings and acts  
50 of the commission shall be entered on the minutes.

51           Two (2) members of the commission shall be a quorum.

52           **SECTION 4.** Section 77-1-6, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
53 reenacted as follows:

54           77-1-6. There is hereby established in the State Treasury a  
55 special fund to be known as the "Public Service Commission  
56 Regulation Fund." Such fund shall be the sole fund of the  
57 commission for all monies collected and deposited to the credit of  
58 or appropriated to the commission. The fund shall be administered  
59 as provided in this title and shall be audited annually by the  
60 State Auditor.

61           **SECTION 5.** Section 77-1-11, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
62 reenacted as follows:



63           77-1-11. (1) It shall be unlawful for any Public Service  
64 Commissioner, any candidate for Public Service Commissioner, or  
65 any employee of the Public Service Commission or Public Utilities  
66 Staff to knowingly accept any gift, pass, money, campaign  
67 contribution or any emolument or other pecuniary benefit  
68 whatsoever, either directly or indirectly, from any person  
69 interested as owner, agent or representative, or from any person  
70 acting in any respect for such owner, agent or representative of  
71 any common or contract carrier by motor vehicle, telephone  
72 company, gas or electric utility company, or any other public  
73 utility that shall come under the jurisdiction or supervision of  
74 the Public Service Commission. Any person found guilty of  
75 violating the provisions of this subsection shall immediately  
76 forfeit his or her office or position and shall be fined not less  
77 than Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000.00), imprisoned in the State  
78 Penitentiary for not less than one (1) year, or both.

79           (2) It shall be unlawful for any person interested as owner,  
80 agent or representative, or any person acting in any respect for  
81 such owner, agent or representative of any common or contract  
82 carrier by motor vehicle, telephone company, gas or electric  
83 utility, or any other public utility that shall come under the  
84 jurisdiction or supervision of the Public Service Commission to  
85 offer any gift, pass, money, campaign contribution or any  
86 emolument or other pecuniary benefit whatsoever to any Public  
87 Service Commissioner, any candidate for Public Service  
88 Commissioner or any employee of the Public Service Commission or  
89 Public Utilities Staff. Any party found guilty of violating the  
90 provisions of this subsection shall be fined not less than Five  
91 Thousand Dollars (\$5,000.00), or imprisoned in the State  
92 Penitentiary for not less than one (1) year, or both.

93           (3) For purposes of this section the term "emolument" shall  
94 include salary, donations, contributions, loans, stock tips,  
95 vacations, trips, honorarium, directorships or consulting posts.



96 Expenses associated with social occasions afforded public servants  
97 shall not be deemed a gift, emolument or other pecuniary benefit  
98 as defined in Section 25-4-103(k), Mississippi Code of 1972.

99 (4) For purposes of this section, a person who is a member  
100 of a water, gas, electric or other cooperative association  
101 regulated by the Public Service Commission shall not, by virtue of  
102 such membership, be deemed an owner, agent or representative of  
103 such association unless such person is acting in any respect for  
104 or as an owner, agent or representative of such association; nor  
105 shall a person who owns less than one-half of one percent (1/2 of  
106 1%) in stock, the value thereof not to exceed Ten Thousand Dollars  
107 (\$10,000.00), of any public utility that is regulated by the  
108 Public Service Commission, or of any holding company of such  
109 public utility, by virtue of such ownership, be deemed an owner,  
110 agent or representative of such public utility unless such person  
111 is acting in any respect for or as an owner, agent or  
112 representative of such public utility.

113 **SECTION 6.** Section 77-1-15, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
114 reenacted as follows:

115 77-1-15. (1) There shall be an executive secretary of the  
116 commission, hereinafter referred to in this chapter as the  
117 secretary, to be appointed by the commission, by and with the  
118 advice and consent of the Senate, for the term of the  
119 commissioners. The secretary must have the same qualifications as  
120 the commissioners and shall be subject to the same  
121 disqualifications and to like penalties, except that he shall not  
122 be liable to impeachment. He shall receive a salary fixed by the  
123 Legislature. He shall take the oath of office and shall be  
124 removable at the pleasure of the commission, which may fill any  
125 vacancy until the Senate confirms a successor. The secretary  
126 shall make bond as provided for other state officers, in the sum  
127 of Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000.00), conditioned upon the  
128 faithful performance of the duties of his office.



129           (2) The secretary shall collect all fees and penalties  
130 collected by or paid to the commission, and shall cover the same  
131 into the State Treasury; and all fees and penalties collected  
132 under the Mississippi Motor Carrier Regulatory Law of 1938 shall  
133 be covered into the Public Service Commission Regulation Fund.

134           (3) The secretary of the commission shall be the custodian  
135 of all records, documents, and the seal of the commission. He  
136 shall issue all citations, subpoenas and other rightful orders and  
137 documents, and perform all other duties usually required of such  
138 officer, and as required by the commission.

139           (4) It shall be the duty and responsibility of the secretary  
140 to supervise and manage the offices and staff of the Public  
141 Service Commission and formulate written policies and procedures  
142 for the effective and efficient operation of the office and  
143 present these policies and procedures to the board for  
144 promulgation.

145           **SECTION 7.** Section 77-1-17, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
146 reenacted as follows:

147           77-1-17. The commission is hereby authorized to employ for  
148 the term of the commissioners a competent rate expert at a salary  
149 fixed by the commission, and an assistant rate expert at a salary  
150 fixed by the commission, for the collection of data and evidence  
151 for the use of the state in protecting the interest of the state  
152 involving duties and obligations of all common carriers, all  
153 common carriers by motor vehicle, all restricted common carriers  
154 by motor vehicle, and all contract carriers by motor vehicle, and  
155 for the establishment of proof in litigation now pending or which  
156 may hereafter be instituted.

157           The rate expert and his assistant shall make all needed  
158 investigations affecting rates and rate making and shall perform  
159 such other duties as the commission may find necessary for them to  
160 do in the interest of the state.



161 Said duties shall also include the checking and investigating  
162 of the filing of rate schedules with the commission, and making of  
163 reports to the commission respecting tariffs filed by any of the  
164 above-mentioned carriers with the commission involving the  
165 increase of any rates for movements within the State of  
166 Mississippi, and the general checking and reports to the  
167 commission affecting any rates increased from points without the  
168 State of Mississippi to points within the State of Mississippi,  
169 and from points in the State of Mississippi to points without the  
170 State of Mississippi. Said rate experts may be discharged by the  
171 commission for incompetency or other good cause, but they shall  
172 have notice and an opportunity to be heard in respect to any  
173 charge for removal.

174 **SECTION 8.** Section 77-1-19, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
175 reenacted as follows:

176 77-1-19. The commission is authorized to employ the  
177 following additional employees to carry out and enforce the  
178 provisions of the Motor Carrier Regulatory Law of 1938:

179 (a) An assistant secretary and two (2)  
180 stenographer-clerks;

181 (b) One (1) combined bookkeeper and stenographer;

182 (c) One (1) stenographer competent to serve as a  
183 reporter of evidence taken before the commission; and

184 (d) Twelve (12) additional employees, which includes  
185 seven (7) employees to be transferred from the utility department  
186 to the motor carrier department to perform the duties of the  
187 commission imposed upon it by the provisions of said Motor Carrier  
188 Regulatory Law.

189 **SECTION 9.** Section 77-1-21, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
190 reenacted as follows:

191 77-1-21. For the purpose of enforcing the provisions of the  
192 Mississippi Motor Carrier Regulatory Law of 1938, the commission  
193 is hereby authorized to employ, in addition to personnel already



194 employed by the commission, one (1) chief enforcement officer and  
195 twenty-one (21) inspectors, the salaries of whom shall be fixed by  
196 the commission. The chief enforcement officer and the inspectors  
197 shall devote their full time to the performance of their duties  
198 and shall take an oath faithfully to perform the duties of their  
199 position. The commission shall require bonds to be carried on  
200 such employees as the commission may deem necessary, the cost  
201 thereof to be paid by the commission. The chief enforcement  
202 officer and inspectors shall be qualified by experience and  
203 training in law enforcement or investigative work, and shall  
204 attend and satisfactorily complete an appropriate course of  
205 instruction established by the Commissioner of Public Safety at  
206 the law enforcement officers training academy. The chief  
207 enforcement officer and the inspectors herein referred to shall be  
208 selected after an examination as to physical and mental fitness.  
209 Such employees shall be citizens of the United States and the  
210 State of Mississippi, and of good moral character. All such  
211 members of staff shall be appointed by the commission and shall be  
212 subject to removal at any time by the commission.

213       **SECTION 10.** Section 77-1-25, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
214 reenacted as follows:

215       77-1-25. No member of the staff of the commission, or any  
216 other person, shall use uniforms, material, or equipment of the  
217 commission for private or political purposes. Members of the  
218 staff of the commission may be candidates for political office but  
219 must take a leave of absence to do so. Members of the staff of  
220 the commission may take part in political campaigns other than  
221 campaigns for Public Service Commission but may not solicit or  
222 receive campaign contributions from regulated utilities. Anyone  
223 violating the provisions of this section shall be guilty of a  
224 misdemeanor and, upon conviction, shall be punished as provided by  
225 law and shall be dismissed from the staff of the commission.



226           **SECTION 11.** Section 77-1-27, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
227 reenacted as follows:

228           77-1-27. All commission employees provided for in this  
229 chapter, and the reasonable and necessary expenses of the  
230 administration of the duties imposed on the commission by the  
231 Motor Carrier Regulatory Law of 1938, shall be paid out of the  
232 appropriations made to defray the expenses of the commission, upon  
233 requisitions and warrants in the same manner provided by law for  
234 the disbursements of appropriations for the commission. An  
235 itemized account shall be kept of all receipts and expenditures  
236 and shall be reported to the Legislature by the commission.

237           **SECTION 12.** Section 77-1-29, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
238 reenacted as follows:

239           77-1-29. On or before the twentieth day of each calendar  
240 month, the commission shall pay into the State Treasury to the  
241 account of the "Public Service Commission Regulation Fund" all  
242 monies collected by it during the preceding calendar month,  
243 showing from whom collected, when collected and for what purposes  
244 collected. All disbursements made by the commission or from the  
245 regulation fund for any purposes, other than for salaries provided  
246 by law, shall be supported by a detailed and itemized statement  
247 approved by the commission for commission disbursements. The  
248 commission shall not expend funds from the "Public Service  
249 Commission Regulation Fund" to employ personnel whose services  
250 would duplicate services provided by any employee of the Public  
251 Utilities Staff.

252           **SECTION 13.** Section 77-1-31, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
253 reenacted as follows:

254           77-1-31. The commission shall keep a docket of petitions and  
255 complaints, which shall be entered in regular order. The docket  
256 shall be called at each regular meeting of the board, and the  
257 cases thereon disposed of, or, if necessary, continued until the  
258 next meeting.





259           **SECTION 14.** Section 77-1-33, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
260 reenacted as follows:

261           77-1-33. In any matter of inquiry pending before the  
262 commission or any member thereof, subpoenas for witnesses, and  
263 subpoenas duces tecum, may be issued by the secretary, under seal,  
264 or by any member without the seal, and shall be executed and  
265 returned by any sheriff, constable, or marshal, under the like  
266 penalties of law for failure to execute and return the process of  
267 the circuit court. If any person duly summoned to appear and  
268 testify before the commission, or before any one or more of the  
269 commissioners, shall fail or refuse to appear and testify, or to  
270 bring and produce, as commanded, any book, paper, or document,  
271 without a lawful excuse, or shall refuse to answer any proper  
272 question propounded to him by the commission or any of the  
273 commissioners, or if any person shall obstruct the commission, or  
274 one or more of the commissioners in the discharge of duty, or  
275 shall conduct himself in a rude, disrespectful, or disorderly  
276 manner before the commission deliberating in the discharge of  
277 duty, such witness or person shall be guilty of a misdemeanor,  
278 and, upon conviction, shall be fined not more than One Thousand  
279 Dollars (\$1,000.00), or be imprisoned in the county jail for a  
280 period not exceeding six (6) months, or both.

281           **SECTION 15.** Section 77-1-35, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
282 reenacted as follows:

283           77-1-35. The several members of the commission and the  
284 secretary may, in the discharge of their duties, administer oaths  
285 and take affidavits. The commission and each member thereof may  
286 examine witnesses under oath in all matters coming before them.  
287 If any person shall testify falsely, or make any false affidavit  
288 or oath before the commission, or before any of the commissioners,  
289 or before any officer, to any matter coming before the commission,  
290 he shall be guilty of perjury, and, upon conviction, shall be  
291 punished according to law.



292           **SECTION 16.** Section 77-1-37, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
293 reenacted as follows:

294           77-1-37. Witnesses summoned to appear before the commission  
295 shall be entitled to the same per diem and mileage as witnesses  
296 attending the circuit court. Witnesses summoned by the commission  
297 on its behalf shall be paid as are other expenditures of the  
298 commission, upon the certificate of the commission showing the  
299 amount to which such witness may be entitled. Witnesses summoned  
300 for any carrier shall be paid by it.

301           **SECTION 17.** Section 77-1-39, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
302 reenacted as follows:

303           77-1-39. In all cases where the testimony of witnesses is  
304 given orally before the commission any interested party or the  
305 commission shall have the right to have said testimony taken down  
306 and transcribed by a stenographer or court reporter, who is not an  
307 employee of the commission, to be agreed upon by the parties or  
308 appointed by the commission. The stenographer or court reporter  
309 so employed shall be duly sworn and his or her certificate that  
310 the transcript of such evidence is correct together with the  
311 official certificate of any one (1) of the commissioners that he  
312 has read the same and that it is in his opinion correct shall  
313 entitle such transcript or a certified copy thereof to be received  
314 in evidence on any appeal or in any court in this state subject  
315 only to any objection that the same is not relevant or material.  
316 The stenographer or court reporter shall be paid in accordance  
317 with the provisions of Section 9-13-33. The commission shall have  
318 the right to require any party demanding an official stenographer  
319 to guarantee or prepay the costs thereof in all proper cases.

320           **SECTION 18.** Section 77-1-41, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
321 reenacted as follows:

322           77-1-41. All findings of the commission and the  
323 determination of every matter by it shall be made in writing and  
324 placed upon its minutes. Proof thereof shall be made by a copy of



325 the same duly certified by the secretary under the seal of the  
326 commission. Whenever any matter has been determined by the  
327 commission, in the course of any proceeding before it the fact of  
328 such determination, duly certified, shall be received in all  
329 courts and by every officer in civil cases as prima facie evidence  
330 that such determination was right and proper. The record of the  
331 proceedings of the commission shall be deemed a public record, and  
332 shall at all reasonable times be subject to the inspection of the  
333 public.

334 **SECTION 19.** Section 77-1-43, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
335 reenacted as follows:

336 77-1-43. (1) The commission may apply to the circuit or  
337 chancery court, by proper proceeding, for aid in the enforcement  
338 of obedience to its process, and to compel compliance with the law  
339 and its lawful orders, decisions, and determinations. Said courts  
340 shall have jurisdiction to grant aid and relief in such cases,  
341 subject to the right of appeal to the Supreme Court by the party  
342 aggrieved. The Attorney General, or district attorney in his  
343 district, shall institute such proceedings in the name of the  
344 commission.

345 (2) Any action for violation of the law, or for the  
346 violation of any lawful rule, regulation or order of the  
347 commission may be instituted by the commission or by the Attorney  
348 General in any court of competent jurisdiction.

349 (3) The remedies given by this chapter against all carriers  
350 under the supervision of the commission, are cumulative to those  
351 now in existence by law.

352 **SECTION 20.** Section 77-1-47, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
353 reenacted as follows:

354 77-1-47. Appeals from any final finding, order or judgment  
355 of the commission shall be taken and perfected by the filing of a  
356 bond in the sum of Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00) with two (2)  
357 sureties, or with a surety company qualified to do business in



358 Mississippi as the surety, conditioned to pay the cost of such  
359 appeal. Said bond shall be approved by the chairman or secretary  
360 of the commission, or by the judge of the court to which such  
361 appeal is taken in case the chairman or secretary of the  
362 commission refuses to approve a proper bond tendered to them  
363 within the time limited for taking appeals. The commission may  
364 grant a supersedeas bond on any appeal, in such penalty and with  
365 such surety thereon as it may deem sufficient, and may, during the  
366 pendency of any appeal, at any time, require the increase of any  
367 such supersedeas bond or additional securities thereon. The judge  
368 of the circuit court of Hinds County may on petition therefor by  
369 any party entitled to an appeal, presented to him within six (6)  
370 months of the date of the final finding, order, or judgment of the  
371 commission appealed from, award a writ of supersedeas to any such  
372 final finding, order, or judgment of the commission, upon the  
373 filing of a supersedeas bond in an amount to be fixed by said  
374 judge. All appeal bonds for the payment of costs, and all  
375 supersedeas bonds, shall be made payable to the state and may be  
376 enforced in the name of the state by motion or other legal  
377 proceedings or remedy in any circuit court of this state having  
378 jurisdiction of a motion or action on such bond, and the process  
379 and proceedings thereon shall be as provided by law upon bonds of  
380 like character required and taken by any court of this state.  
381 Such circuit court may render and enter like judgments upon such  
382 bonds as may, by law, be rendered and entered upon bonds of like  
383 character, and process of execution shall issue upon such  
384 judgments, and may be levied and executed as provided by law in  
385 other cases.

386       **SECTION 21.** Section 77-1-49, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
387 reenacted as follows:

388       77-1-49. The commission shall make a report every year to  
389 the Legislature of all its acts and doings for the preceding  
390 fiscal year.



391           **SECTION 22.** Section 77-1-51, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
392 amended as follows:

393           77-1-51. Sections 77-1-1 through 77-1-49, Mississippi Code  
394 of 1972, which create the Public Service Commission and prescribe  
395 its powers and duties, shall stand repealed as of December 31,  
396 2006.

397           **SECTION 23.** The Attorney General of the State of Mississippi  
398 shall submit this act, immediately upon approval by the Governor,  
399 or upon approval by the Legislature subsequent to a veto, to the  
400 Attorney General of the United States or to the United States  
401 District Court for the District of Columbia in accordance with the  
402 provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended and  
403 extended.

404           **SECTION 24.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
405 and after July 1, 2002, if it is effectuated on or before that  
406 date under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended  
407 and extended. If it is effectuated under Section 5 of the Voting  
408 Rights Act of 1965, as amended and extended, after July 1, 2002,  
409 this act shall take effect and be in force from and after the date  
410 it is effectuated under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act of  
411 1965, as amended and extended.

