

By: Representative Montgomery (15th)

To: Judiciary A

HOUSE BILL NO. 116

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTIONS 93-5-23 AND 93-11-65, MISSISSIPPI
2 CODE OF 1972, TO REQUIRE RECIPIENTS OF CHILD SUPPORT TO SUBMIT AN
3 ACCOUNTING OF EXPENDITURES TO THE COURT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

5 **SECTION 1.** Section 93-5-23, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
6 amended as follows:

7 93-5-23. When a divorce shall be decreed from the bonds of
8 matrimony, the court may, in its discretion, having regard to the
9 circumstances of the parties and the nature of the case, as may
10 seem equitable and just, make all orders touching the care,
11 custody and maintenance of the children of the marriage, and also
12 touching the maintenance and alimony of the wife or the husband,
13 or any allowance to be made to her or him, and shall, if need be,
14 require bond, sureties or other guarantee for the payment of the
15 sum so allowed. Orders touching on the custody of the children of
16 the marriage shall be made in accordance with the provisions of
17 Section 93-5-24. The court may afterwards, on petition, change
18 the decree, and make from time to time such new decrees as the
19 case may require. However, where proof shows that both parents
20 have separate incomes or estates, the court may require that each
21 parent contribute to the support and maintenance of the children
22 of the marriage in proportion to the relative financial ability of
23 each. In the event a legally responsible parent has health
24 insurance available to him or her through an employer or
25 organization that may extend benefits to the dependents of such
26 parent, any order of support issued against such parent may
27 require him or her to exercise the option of additional coverage



28 in favor of such children as he or she is legally responsible to
29 support.

30 Whenever the court has ordered a party to make periodic
31 payments for the maintenance or support of a child, but no bond,
32 sureties or other guarantee has been required to secure such
33 payments, and whenever such payments as have become due remain
34 unpaid for a period of at least thirty (30) days, the court may,
35 upon petition of the person to whom such payments are owing, or
36 such person's legal representative, enter an order requiring that
37 bond, sureties or other security be given by the person obligated
38 to make such payments, the amount and sufficiency of which shall
39 be approved by the court. The obligor shall, as in other civil
40 actions, be served with process and shall be entitled to a hearing
41 in such case.

42 Whenever in any proceeding in the chancery court concerning
43 the custody of a child a party alleges that the child whose
44 custody is at issue has been the victim of sexual or physical
45 abuse by the other party, the court may, on its own motion, grant
46 a continuance in the custody proceeding only until such allegation
47 has been investigated by the Department of Human Services. At the
48 time of ordering such continuance the court may direct the party,
49 and his attorney, making such allegation of child abuse to report
50 in writing and provide all evidence touching on the allegation of
51 abuse to the Department of Human Services. The Department of
52 Human Services shall investigate such allegation and take such
53 action as it deems appropriate and as provided in such cases under
54 the Youth Court Law (being Chapter 21 of Title 43, Mississippi
55 Code of 1972) or under the laws establishing family courts (being
56 Chapter 23 of Title 43, Mississippi Code of 1972).

57 If after investigation by the Department of Human Services or
58 final disposition by the youth court or family court allegations
59 of child abuse are found to be without foundation, the chancery
60 court shall order the alleging party to pay all court costs and



61 reasonable attorney's fees incurred by the defending party in
62 responding to such allegation.

63 The court may investigate, hear and make a determination in a
64 custody action when a charge of abuse and/or neglect arises in the
65 course of a custody action as provided in Section 43-21-151, and
66 in such cases the court shall appoint a guardian ad litem for the
67 child as provided under Section 43-21-121, who shall be an
68 attorney. Unless the chancery court's jurisdiction has been
69 terminated, all disposition orders in such cases for placement
70 with the Department of Human Services shall be reviewed by the
71 court or designated authority at least annually to determine if
72 continued placement with the department is in the best interest of
73 the child or public.

74 The duty of support of a child terminates upon the
75 emancipation of the child. The court may determine that
76 emancipation has occurred and no other support obligation exists
77 when the child:

78 (a) Attains the age of twenty-one (21) years, or

79 (b) Marries, or

80 (c) Discontinues full-time enrollment in school and
81 obtains full-time employment prior to attaining the age of
82 twenty-one (21) years, or

83 (d) Voluntarily moves from the home of the custodial
84 parent or guardian and establishes independent living arrangements
85 and obtains full-time employment prior to attaining the age of
86 twenty-one (21) years.

87 The party receiving child support shall provide a monthly
88 itemized statement to the chancery court accounting for such child
89 support.

90 **SECTION 2.** Section 93-11-65, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
91 amended as follows:

92 93-11-65. (1) (a) In addition to the right to proceed
93 under Section 93-5-23, Mississippi Code of 1972, and in addition



94 to the remedy of habeas corpus in proper cases, and other existing
95 remedies, the chancery court of the proper county shall have
96 jurisdiction to entertain suits for the custody, care, support and
97 maintenance of minor children and to hear and determine all such
98 matters, and shall, if need be, require bond, sureties or other
99 guarantee to secure any order for periodic payments for the
100 maintenance or support of a child. In the event a legally
101 responsible parent has health insurance available to him or her
102 through an employer or organization that may extend benefits to
103 the dependents of such parent, any order of support issued against
104 such parent may require him or her to exercise the option of
105 additional coverage in favor of such children as he or she is
106 legally responsible to support. Proceedings may be brought by or
107 against a resident or nonresident of the State of Mississippi,
108 whether or not having the actual custody of minor children, for
109 the purpose of judicially determining the legal custody of a
110 child. All actions herein authorized may be brought in the county
111 where the child is actually residing, or in the county of the
112 residence of the party who has actual custody, or of the residence
113 of the defendant. Process shall be had upon the parties as
114 provided by law for process in person or by publication, if they
115 be nonresidents of the state or residents of another jurisdiction
116 or are not found thereafter diligent search and inquiry or are
117 unknown after diligent search and inquiry; provided that the court
118 or chancellor in vacation may fix a date in termtime or in
119 vacation to which process may be returnable and shall have power
120 to proceed in termtime or vacation. Provided, however, that if
121 the court shall find that both parties are fit and proper persons
122 to have custody of the children, and that either party is able to
123 adequately provide for the care and maintenance of the children,
124 and that it would be to the best interest and welfare of the
125 children, then any such child who shall have reached his twelfth



126 birthday shall have the privilege of choosing the parent with whom
127 he shall live.

128 (b) An order of child support shall specify the sum to
129 be paid weekly or otherwise. In addition to providing for support
130 and education, the order shall also provide for the support of the
131 child prior to the making of the order for child support, and such
132 other expenses as the court may deem proper.

133 (c) The court may require the payment to be made to the
134 custodial parent, or to some person or corporation to be
135 designated by the court as trustee, but if the child or custodial
136 parent is receiving public assistance, the Department of Human
137 Services shall be made the trustee.

138 (d) The noncustodial parent's liabilities for past
139 education and necessary support and maintenance and other expenses
140 are limited to a period of one (1) year next preceding the
141 commencement of an action.

142 (2) Provided further, that where the proof shows that both
143 parents have separate incomes or estates, the court may require
144 that each parent contribute to the support and maintenance of the
145 children in proportion to the relative financial ability of each.

146 (3) Whenever the court has ordered a party to make periodic
147 payments for the maintenance or support of a child, but no bond,
148 sureties or other guarantee has been required to secure such
149 payments, and whenever such payments as have become due remain
150 unpaid for a period of at least thirty (30) days, the court may,
151 upon petition of the person to whom such payments are owing, or
152 such person's legal representative, enter an order requiring that
153 bond, sureties or other security be given by the person obligated
154 to make such payments, the amount and sufficiency of which shall
155 be approved by the court. The obligor shall, as in other civil
156 actions, be served with process and shall be entitled to a hearing
157 in such case.



158 (4) When a charge of abuse or neglect of a child first
159 arises in the course of a custody or maintenance action pending in
160 the chancery court pursuant to this section, the chancery court
161 may proceed with the investigation, hearing and determination of
162 such abuse or neglect charge as a part of its hearing and
163 determination of the custody or maintenance issue as between the
164 parents, as provided in Section 43-21-151, notwithstanding the
165 other provisions of the Youth Court Law. The proceedings in
166 chancery court on the abuse or neglect charge shall be
167 confidential in the same manner as provided in youth court
168 proceedings, and the chancery court shall appoint a guardian ad
169 litem in such cases, as provided under Section 43-21-121 for youth
170 court proceedings, who shall be an attorney. Unless the chancery
171 court's jurisdiction has been terminated, all disposition orders
172 in such cases for placement with the Department of Human Services
173 shall be reviewed by the court or designated authority at least
174 annually to determine if continued placement with the department
175 is in the best interest of the child or the public.

176 (5) Each party to a paternity or child support proceeding
177 shall notify the other within five (5) days after any change of
178 address. In addition, the noncustodial and custodial parent shall
179 file and update, with the court and with the state case registry,
180 information on that party's location and identity, including
181 social security number, residential and mailing addresses,
182 telephone numbers, photograph, driver's license number, and name,
183 address and telephone number of the party's employer. This
184 information shall be required upon entry of an order or within
185 five (5) days of a change of address.

186 (6) In any case subsequently enforced by the Department of
187 Human Services pursuant to Title IV-D of the Social Security Act,
188 the court shall have continuing jurisdiction.

189 (7) In any subsequent child support enforcement action
190 between the parties, upon sufficient showing that diligent effort



191 has been made to ascertain the location of a party, due process
192 requirements for notice and service of process shall be deemed to
193 be met with respect to the party upon delivery of written notice
194 to the most recent residential or employer address filed with the
195 state case registry.

196 (8) The duty of support of a child terminates upon the
197 emancipation of the child. The court may determine that
198 emancipation has occurred and no other support obligation exists
199 when the child:

200 (a) Attains the age of twenty-one (21) years, or

201 (b) Marries, or

202 (c) Discontinues full-time enrollment in school and
203 obtains full-time employment prior to attaining the age of
204 twenty-one (21) years, or

205 (d) Voluntarily moves from the home of the custodial
206 parent or guardian and establishes independent living arrangements
207 and obtains full-time employment prior to attaining the age of
208 twenty-one (21) years.

209 (9) Upon motion of a party requesting temporary child
210 support pending a determination of parentage, temporary support
211 shall be ordered if there is clear and convincing evidence of
212 paternity on the basis of genetic tests or other evidence, unless
213 the court makes written findings of fact on the record that the
214 award of temporary support would be unjust or inappropriate in a
215 particular case.

216 (10) The party receiving child support shall provide a
217 monthly itemized statement to the chancery court accounting for
218 such child support.

219 **SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
220 and after July 1, 2003.

