

By: Representative Watson

To: Universities and
Colleges; Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 568

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-106-31, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,
2 TO DECREASE THE MINIMUM ACT SCORE REQUIRED FOR STUDENTS TO BE
3 ELIGIBLE FOR A SCHOLARSHIP UNDER THE MISSISSIPPI EMINENT SCHOLARS
4 PROGRAM; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

6 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-106-31, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
7 amended as follows:

8 37-106-31. (1) There is created a Mississippi Eminent
9 Scholars Fund, to be administered by the Mississippi Postsecondary
10 Education Financial Assistance Board established under Section
11 37-106-9. The board shall set the date that will serve as the
12 deadline for applying for an award under this section and award
13 scholarships to each Mississippi student who:

14 (a) (i) Is recognized by the merit or achievement
15 programs of the National Merit Scholarship Corporation or the
16 National Achievement Scholarship as a semifinalist or finalist,
17 and has obtained a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.5
18 calculated on a 4.0 scale in high school subjects acceptable for
19 credit toward a diploma, after seven (7) semesters certified by
20 the high school counselor or other authorized school official on
21 the application, and graduation from high school verified by the
22 institution before disbursement of award; or

23 (ii) Has scored twenty-six (26) on the American
24 College Testing Program or its equivalent, and has obtained a
25 minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.5 calculated on a 4.0
26 scale after seven (7) semesters certified by the high school
27 counselor or other authorized school official on the application,
28 and graduation from high school verified by the institution before



29 disbursement of award, or the equivalent in high school subjects
30 acceptable for credit toward a diploma; or

31 (iii) Has attended a home education program during
32 grade levels 9 through 12 and has scored twenty-six (26) on the
33 American College Testing Program or its equivalent; and

34 (iv) Has been certified by the college or
35 university to the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial
36 Assistance Board as a Mississippi Eminent Scholar.

37 (b) Meets the general requirements for student
38 eligibility, except as otherwise provided in this section.

39 (c) Dependents of Mississippi residents who are on
40 military or public service assignments away from Mississippi when
41 such dependents live with such Mississippi residents and receive
42 high school diplomas from non-Mississippi schools shall be
43 exempted from certain requirements by the board.

44 (d) Files, before the deadline, an application for an
45 award during his last year in high school, or before the
46 expiration of the third school year succeeding the year of his
47 high school graduation.

48 (e) Attends, on a full-time basis, any state
49 institution of higher learning or public community or junior
50 college, or any regionally accredited, state-approved, nonprofit
51 four- or two-year college or university located in the State of
52 Mississippi as listed in subsection (4)(d) of Section 37-106-29.

53 (f) Enrolls for the first time as a college student in
54 Mississippi. Any student who earns postsecondary academic credit
55 prior to or during the summer immediately subsequent to receiving
56 a high school diploma, who is dually enrolled in secondary and
57 postsecondary educational institutions, or who is enrolled in the
58 early admission program of a postsecondary institution shall be
59 exempt from this requirement.

60 (g) Is a resident of the State of Mississippi.
61 Residency status for purposes of receiving grants under this



62 section shall be determined in the same manner as resident status
63 for tuition purposes as set forth in Sections 37-103-1 through
64 37-103-29, with the exception of Section 37-103-17.

65 (2) (a) Students who apply for awards but do not accept
66 their initial awards may reapply to receive awards during
67 subsequent application periods occurring before the expiration of
68 the third school year succeeding the year of their high school
69 graduation. Similarly, students who receive initial awards and
70 who later do not accept renewal awards may reapply to receive
71 awards during subsequent application periods occurring before the
72 expiration of the third school year succeeding the year of their
73 high school graduation. The institution shall accept
74 reinstatement applications according to dates set by the
75 Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board and
76 shall determine the eligibility of such applicants in the same
77 manner as first-time applicants, except that students who apply
78 pursuant to this paragraph shall be required to have maintained
79 the equivalent of a 3.5 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0
80 scale for all college work attempted. The board shall not make
81 awards to reinstatement applicants who submit applications that
82 are received after the deadline set by the Mississippi
83 Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board.

84 (b) The board shall create a renewal application for
85 each student who received the award for one or more terms during
86 the immediately preceding academic year.

87 (3) (a) The annual award to a student shall be up to Two
88 Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500.00) for tuition and fees.
89 Payment of the Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant shall be made
90 payable to the recipient and the educational institution and
91 mailed directly to the institution, to be applied first to
92 tuition.

93 (b) Within six (6) weeks of the end of regular
94 registration, inclusive of a drop-add period, institutions shall



95 certify to the board the eligibility status of each awarded
96 student. The eligibility status of each student to receive a
97 disbursement shall be determined by each institution as of this
98 date. Institutions shall not be required to reevaluate a
99 student's eligibility status after this date for purposes of
100 amending eligibility determinations previously made. However, an
101 institution shall be requested to make refunds for students who
102 receive award disbursements and terminate enrollment for any
103 reason during the academic term when an institution's refund
104 policies permit a student to receive a refund under the
105 circumstances.

106 (c) Institutions shall certify to the board the amount
107 of funds disbursed to each student and shall remit to the board
108 any undisbursed advances within sixty (60) days of the end of
109 regular registration.

110 (4) A recipient shall maintain the equivalent of a 3.5
111 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale, or shall maintain
112 an approved equivalent student progress evaluation plan, on at
113 least twelve (12) hours per quarter, trimester or semester in
114 order to be eligible for a continuation of the award. No student
115 may receive a Mississippi Eminent Scholars Fund award for more
116 than the equivalent semesters or quarters required to complete one
117 (1) degree or certificate program per institution. The award may
118 be renewed annually upon certification of eligibility by the
119 eligible institutions that the recipient meets the necessary
120 qualifications. If any recipient transfers from one university,
121 community college or junior college to another, his award will be
122 transferable, provided he is otherwise eligible for the award. If
123 a student fails to maintain continuous enrollment, and is not
124 granted an exception for cause by the administering agency, the
125 student is ineligible to receive the Mississippi Eminent Scholars
126 Grant during the following semester or trimester or term of the
127 regular academic year.



128 (5) The board may conduct its own annual audits of any
129 institution participating in the Mississippi Eminent Scholars
130 Grant Program. The board may suspend or revoke an institution's
131 eligibility to receive future monies under the program if it finds
132 that the institution has not complied with the provisions of this
133 section.

134 (6) For purposes of this section, certificated shall mean,
135 but not be limited to, all postsecondary vocational programs in
136 eligible institutions as identified in subsection (4)(d) of
137 Section 37-106-29.

138 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
139 and after July 1, 2003.

