AN ACT TO AMEND SECTIONS 23-15-627 AND 23-15-713, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO ALLOW QUALIFIED ELECTORS TO VOTE BY ABSENTEE BALLOT FOR ANY REASON; TO AMEND SECTION 23-15-653, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO REQUIRE ALL REGISTRARS' OFFICES TO REMAIN OPEN FROM 7 A.M. TO 7 P.M. ON THE THREE SATURDAYS PRIOR TO EACH ELECTION; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. Section 23-15-627, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

23-15-627. The registrar shall be responsible for furnishing an absentee ballot application form to any elector authorized to receive an absentee ballot. Absentee ballot applications shall be furnished to a person only upon the oral or written request of the elector who seeks to vote by absentee ballot; however, the parent, child, spouse, sibling, legal guardian, those empowered with a power of attorney for that elector's affairs or agent of the elector may orally request an absentee ballot application on behalf of the elector. An absentee ballot application must have the seal of the circuit or municipal clerk affixed to it and be initialed by the registrar or his deputy in order to be utilized to obtain an absentee ballot. A reproduction of an absentee ballot application shall not be valid unless it is a reproduction provided by the office of the registrar of the jurisdiction in which the election is being held and which contains the seal and initials required by this section. Such application shall be substantially in the following form:

"OFFICIAL APPLICATION FOR ABSENT ELECTOR'S BALLOT

I, _____, duly qualified and registered in the ___ Precinct of the County of _____, and State of Mississippi, coming within
the purview of the definition 'ABSENT ELECTOR' will be absent from the county of my residence on election day, or desire to vote by absentee ballot because (check appropriate reason):

( ) (PRESIDENTIAL APPLICANT ONLY:) I am currently a resident of Mississippi or have moved therefrom within thirty (30) days of the coming presidential election.

( ) I am an enlisted or commissioned member, male or female, of any component of the United States Armed Forces and am a citizen of Mississippi, or spouse or dependent of such member.

( ) I am a member of the Merchant Marine or the American Red Cross and am a citizen of Mississippi or spouse or dependent of such member.

( ) I am a disabled war veteran who is a patient in any hospital and am a citizen of Mississippi or spouse or dependent of such veteran.

( ) I am a civilian attached to and serving outside of the United States with any branch of the Armed Forces or with the Merchant Marine or American Red Cross, and am a citizen of Mississippi or spouse or dependent of such civilian.

( ) I am a citizen of Mississippi temporarily residing outside the territorial limits of the United States and the District of Columbia.

( ) I am a student, teacher or administrator at a college, university, junior or community college, high, junior high, elementary or grade school, whose studies or employment at such institution necessitates my absence from the county of my voting residence or spouse or dependent of such student, teacher or administrator who maintains a common domicile outside the county of my voting residence with such student, teacher or administrator.

( ) I desire to vote by absentee ballot at this election.

( ) I have a temporary or permanent physical disability.

( ) I am sixty-five (65) years of age or older.
( ) I am the parent, spouse or dependent of a person with a temporary or permanent physical disability who is hospitalized outside his county of residence or more than fifty (50) miles away from his residence, and I will be with such person on election day.

( ) I am a member of the congressional delegation, or spouse or dependent of a member of the congressional delegation.

***

I hereby make application for an official ballot, or ballots, to be voted by me at the election to be held in ____, on ____.

Mail 'Absent Elector's Ballot' to me at the following address ____________ (if eligible to vote by mail).

I realize that I can be fined up to Five Thousand Dollars ($5,000.00) and sentenced up to five (5) years in the Penitentiary for making a false statement in this application and for selling my vote and violating the Mississippi Absentee Voter Law. (This sentence is to be in bold print.)

If you are temporarily or permanently disabled, you are not required to have this application notarized or signed by an official authorized to administer oaths for absentee balloting.

You are required to sign this application in the proper place and have a person eighteen (18) years of age or older witness your signature and sign this application in the proper place.

DO NOT SIGN WITHOUT READING. (This sentence is to be in bold print.)

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand and seal this the ____ day of _____, 2___.

_________________________________
(Signature of absent elector)

SWORN TO AND SUBSCRIBED before me this the ____ day of _____, 2___.

_________________________________  
(Official authorized to administer oaths)
for absentee balloting.)

TO BE SIGNED BY WITNESS FOR VOTERS TEMPORARILY OR PERMANENTLY DISABLED:

I HEREBY CERTIFY that this application for an absent elector's ballot was signed by the above-named disabled elector in my presence and that I am at least eighteen (18) years of age, this the ____ day of ________________, 2___.

_________________________________
(Signature of witness)

CERTIFICATE OF DELIVERY

I hereby certify that _____________ (print name of voter) has requested that I, _______________ (print name of person delivering application), deliver to the voter this absentee ballot application.

__________________________________________
(Signature of person delivering application)

__________________________________________
(Address of person delivering application)

SECTION 2. Section 23-15-713, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

23-15-713. For the purpose of this subarticle, any duly qualified elector may vote as provided in this subarticle if he be one who falls within the following categories:

(a) Any qualified elector who is a bona fide student, teacher or administrator at any college, university, junior college, high, junior high or elementary grade school whose studies or employment at such institution necessitates his absence from the county of his voting residence on the date of any primary, general or special election, or the spouse and dependents of said student, teacher or administrator if such spouse or dependent(s) maintain a common domicile, outside of the county of his voting residence, with such student, teacher or administrator.
Any qualified elector who is required to be away from his place of residence on any election day due to his employment as an employee of a member of the Mississippi congressional delegation and the spouse and dependents of such person if he or she shall be residing with such absentee voter away from the county of the spouse's voting residence.

Any qualified elector who desires to vote by absentee ballot for any reason.

Any person who has a temporary or permanent physical disability and who, because of such disability, is unable to vote in person without substantial hardship to himself or others, or whose attendance at the voting place could reasonably cause danger to himself or others.

The parent, spouse or dependent of a person with a temporary or permanent physical disability who is hospitalized outside of his county of residence or more than fifty (50) miles distant from his residence, if the parent, spouse or dependent will be with such person on election day.

Any person who is sixty-five (65) years of age or older.

Any member of the Mississippi congressional delegation absent from Mississippi on election day, and the spouse and dependents of such member of the congressional delegation.

SECTION 3. Section 23-15-653, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

23-15-653. All registrars' offices shall remain open from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. on the three (3) Saturdays prior to each election.

SECTION 4. The Attorney General of the State of Mississippi shall submit this act, immediately upon approval by the Governor, or upon approval by the Legislature subsequent to a veto, to the Attorney General of the United States or to the United States
District Court for the District of Columbia in accordance with the provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended and extended.  

SECTION 5. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after the date it is effectuated under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended and extended.