To: Education; Appropriations

MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION 2003

By: Senator(s) Chamberlin

To: Education; Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2160

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A TEACHER RETENTION SCHOLARSHIP GRANT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE THAT SCHOLARSHIPS SHALL BE AVAILABLE TO TEACHERS CURRENTLY EMPLOYED IN ANY SCHOOL DISTRICT IN THE STATE WORKING TOWARD A MASTER'S OR DOCTORATE OF EDUCATION DEGREE; TO PLACE SUBSEQUENT SCHOOL DISTRICT EMPLOYMENT AS A CONDITION FOR RECEIPT OF THE SCHOLARSHIP; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. (1) There is established the Teacher Retention Grant Program within the State Department of Education. The purposes of the program shall be to retain the qualified teachers already serving as licensed teachers by making available scholarships to persons working towards a Master of Education degree, an Educational Specialist degree or a Doctor of Education degree at an institution of higher learning whose teacher education program is approved by the State Board of Education.

(2) Any institution of higher learning in the State of Mississippi which offers a Master of Education degree, an Educational Specialist degree or a Doctor of Education degree may apply to the department for participation in the program.

(3) The State Department of Education shall provide funds to participating institutions of higher learning for the purpose of awarding scholarships to licensed teachers currently employed by a school district in Mississippi and pursuing a Master of Education degree, an Educational Specialist degree or a Doctor of Education degree at such institutions while continuing to render service to the state as a licensed teacher in a school district located in the state. The financial scholarship shall be applied to the total cost for tuition, books, materials and fees at the institution in which the student is enrolled, not to exceed an
amount equal to the highest total cost of tuition, books,
materials and fees assessed by a state institution of higher
learning during that school year.

(4) Students awarded financial scholarships under the
Teacher Retention Grant Program may receive such awards for a
maximum of four (4) school years; however, the maximum number of
awards which may be made shall not exceed the length of time
required to complete the number of academic hours necessary to
obtain a Master of Education degree, an Educational Specialist
degree or a Doctor of Education degree. Financial scholarships
under the program shall not be based upon an applicant's
eligibility for financial aid.

(5) Subject to the availability of funds, the State Board of
Education may provide for professional development and support
services as may be necessary for the retention of teachers
participating in the program.

(6) Any person participating in the program who fails to
complete a program of study that will enable that person to obtain
a Master of Education degree, Educational Specialist degree or
Doctor of Education degree shall become liable immediately to the
State Board of Education for the sum of all awards made to that
person under the program, plus interest accruing at the current
Stafford Loan rate at the time the person abrogates his
participation in the program.

(7) As a condition for participation in the program, a
teacher shall agree to continued employment as a licensed teacher
in a school district located in the state, for a period of not
less than three (3) years which shall follow those years of
service rendered while obtaining the Master of Education degree,
Educational Specialist degree or Doctor of Education degree.
However, for any person who obtained a baccalaureate degree in
education with a financial scholarship under the Critical Needs
Teacher Scholarship Program and who entered the Teacher Retention
ST: Teacher Retention Grant Program; scholarships available to teachers working for a Master's or Doctorate of Education degree.