MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE REGULAR SESSION 2003

By: Senator(s) Furniss

To: Veterans and Military Affairs

SENATE BILL NO. 2517

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 35-7-15, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO CORRECT THE LOCATION REFERENCE TO THE OFFICE OF THE VETERANS' HOME PURCHASE BOARD WHEREBY APPLICATIONS ARE PROCESSED; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. Section 35-7-15, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

35-7-15. Any person deeming himself a veteran, and desiring to benefit under the provisions of this chapter, shall submit to the board information, in such form as may be prescribed, that will enable the board to determine his eligibility and qualifications. The board may make such further inquiries and investigations as it deems proper and necessary in order to determine such eligibility and qualifications. Applicant priority for processing shall be in accordance with the order in which the fully completed application forms are received and verified as eligible for consideration in the board's <u>Pearl, Mississippi,</u> office. Once accepted, the qualified and eligible applicant will retain his priority as on a waiting list until the time that funds are available to fully process his application, or until it is ascertained that the applicant is no longer eligible or qualified for the loan, or until the applicant withdraws himself from consideration. The board may suspend the taking of applications from time to time based on availability of funds. The board shall not maintain applications which are projected to exceed one (1) year before final processing. In each instance of suspension, the board will project a date in the future when applications will be

again accepted in order that persons inquiring for application may know to do so after such date.

Veterans who are otherwise qualified and who have a service connected, permanent disability, as verified by the Veterans' Administration or a branch of the United States Armed Forces, rating fifty percent (50%) or greater, will receive priority over other applicants waiting for consideration. Veterans who have not purchased a single family, permanent home since their honorable discharge from active duty and have not owned a single family residence in the State of Mississippi while serving in the armed services may be given priority over other veterans waiting to make application. This priority will be second only to those veterans given priority due to a service-connected disability of fifty percent (50%) or greater. Such returning veterans must meet all other eligibility and qualification criteria, including Mississippi residence requirements. This priority will apply only during the first five (5) years following the veteran's discharge and will apply to veterans who served in Vietnam regardless of time since discharge.

The board shall establish rules and procedures to provide a waiting system, limitations on waiting, and the priority preference given to disabled and other special veteran groups when the number of veterans desiring to apply for a purchase at any time exceeds the funds available in the revolving fund for purchases or the number of applications that can be reasonably processed.

It is the intent of the Legislature that access to the revolving fund be available on an equitable basis to all eligible veterans throughout the state. The board is, therefore, authorized to travel, conduct and attend meetings, advertise and announce through public service and commercial media, prepare and distribute audio/visual and printed publications, and otherwise announce and promote among veterans the provisions of this law.

The board shall monitor application and purchase distribution throughout the state based upon available information concerning veteran population in certain geographic units such as districts, counties and major metropolitan areas, and is authorized to halt, limit or place temporary moratoriums on further purchase applications from areas determined by the board to have excess purchases in relation to the veteran population of that area. At the same time, the board shall have the authority to employ discriminatory announcement and promotion activities in areas determined to have a shortage of purchases. The board shall not set quotas or other inflexible limits on any geographic unit nor shall the board solicit purchase applications from any veteran, group of veterans or geographic unit.

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