SENATE BILL NO. 2591

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A STUDY COMMITTEE ON CREATING A
2 MISSISSIPPI HELPING OUTSTANDING PUPILS EDUCATIONALLY (MHOPE)
3 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM; TO DIRECT THE STUDY COMMITTEE TO SUBMIT A
4 WRITTEN REPORT OF ITS FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE
5 LEGISLATURE BEFORE DECEMBER 1, 2003; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. (1) There is established a study committee on
creating a Mississippi Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally
(MHOPE) scholarship program to study and make recommendations to
the Legislature on the establishment and implementation of a
program of free college tuition in the State of Mississippi for
highly achieving Mississippi students. The committee shall make a
report of its findings and recommendations to the Legislature
before December 1, 2003.

(2) The committee shall examine the Helping Outstanding
Pupils Educationally (HOPE) scholarship program in the State of
Georgia and similar programs that have been implemented in other
states in order to gain a full understanding of such programs. In
its report to the Legislature, the committee shall include
recommended modifications, if any, which should be made to the
Georgia HOPE program for MHOPE and suggestions on the possible
integration of currently existing scholarship and tuition
assistance programs in Mississippi with MHOPE. The report must
include a fiscal note on the projected costs of MHOPE, and the
committee shall identify possible revenue streams for funding the
program.

(3) The study committee shall be composed of the following
fifteen (15) members:
(a) The Chairmen of the House Universities and Colleges, Education and Appropriations Committees;

(b) Two (2) members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House, or their designees from the House membership;

(c) The Chairmen of the Senate Universities and Colleges, Education and Appropriations Committees;

(d) Two (2) members of the Senate appointed by the Lieutenant Governor, or their designees from the Senate membership;

(e) The Commissioner of Higher Education or his designee;

(f) The State Superintendent of Public Education or his designee;

(g) The President of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning or his designee from the board;

(h) The President of State Board for Community and Junior Colleges or his designee from the board; and

(i) A representative of a local district of Rotary International or his designee.

In making their legislative appointments, the Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the House shall endeavor to achieve a diverse representation, with all geographical areas of the state being represented on the committee.

(4) If any chairman of a legislative committee serving on the study committee is unable to attend any meeting of the committee, the vice chairman of the respective committee may attend and vote at such meeting. Appointments shall be made within thirty (30) days after passage of this act. Within fifteen (15) days thereafter, on a day to be designated jointly by the Speaker of the House and the Lieutenant Governor, the study committee shall meet and organize by selecting from its membership a chairman and vice chairman. The vice chairman shall serve as
secretary and shall be responsible for keeping all records of the 
study committee. A majority of the members of the study committee 
shall constitute a quorum. In the selection of its officers and 
the adoption of rules, resolutions and reports, an affirmative 
vote of a majority of the study committee is required. All 
members shall be notified in writing of all meetings, and such 
notices must be mailed at least five (5) days before the date on 
which a meeting is to be held.

(5) Subject to the availability of funds, for attending 
meetings of the study committee, members who are not legislators 
shall be compensated at the per diem rate authorized by Section 
25-3-69, Mississippi Code of 1972, and shall be reimbursed in 
accordance with Section 25-3-41, Mississippi Code of 1972, for 
mileage and actual expenses incurred in attending meetings of the 
committee. Each legislative member of the committee shall be paid 
from the contingent expense fund of his respective house per diem 
in the amount authorized by Section 25-3-69, Mississippi Code of 
1972, and a mileage allowance and an expense allowance in the 
amount authorized by Section 5-1-47, Mississippi Code of 1972. 
However, no per diem, mileage allowance or expense allowance may 
be paid for attending meetings of the committee while the 
Legislature is in session, and no per diem, mileage allowance or 
expense allowance may be paid without prior approval of the proper 
committee in the member's respective house. Any member who is 
also a state employee shall not be eligible to receive per diem 
compensation. No study committee member may incur per diem, 
travel or other expenses unless previously authorized by vote, at 
a meeting of the study committee, which action must be recorded in 
the official minutes of the meeting. Nonlegislative members may 
be paid from any funds made available to the study committee for 
that purpose.

(6) The study committee may employ consultants or staff and 
may utilize clerical and legal staff employed by the Board of
Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning, the Office of the Governor, the Legislature and any other staff assistance made available to the committee.

(7) Funding for the study committee may be provided from any funds that may be appropriated by the Legislature for the expenses of the study committee. The study committee may accept money from any source, public or private, to be expended in implementing its duties under this act.

(8) Upon presentation of its report to the Legislature before the 2004 Regular Session, the study committee shall be dissolved.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.