

By: Representative Fleming

To: Education

HOUSE BILL NO. 634

1 AN ACT TO CREATE A TASK FORCE TO BE KNOWN AS THE "MISSISSIPPI
2 AFTER-SCHOOL INITIATIVE TASK FORCE" TO DEVELOP A PLAN TO ENSURE
3 QUALITY AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR EVERY SCHOOL-AGE CHILD IN THE
4 STATE OF MISSISSIPPI; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

6 WHEREAS, current studies about what happens to unsupervised
7 children indicate that when left alone, these children have higher
8 absentee rates at school, have lower academic test scores, exhibit
9 higher levels of fear, stress, nightmares, loneliness and boredom,
10 are one and seven-tenths (1-7/10) times more likely to use alcohol
11 and are one and six-tenths (1-6/10) times more likely to smoke
12 cigarettes; and

13 WHEREAS, recent data shows that in several communities
14 throughout the United States, the violent juvenile crime rate
15 soars in the hours immediately after the school bell rings and
16 children are most likely to be victims of a violent crime
17 committed by a nonfamily member between 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.;
18 and

19 WHEREAS, research indicates that children who attend high
20 quality after-school programs have better peer relations,
21 emotional adjustment, conflict resolution skills, grades and
22 conduct in school compared to their peers who are not in
23 after-school programs; and

24 WHEREAS, children who attend after-school programs spend more
25 time in learning opportunities, academic activities and enrichment
26 activities and spend less time watching television than their
27 peers; and

28 WHEREAS, in one (1) study, children who attended an
29 after-school program missed fewer days of school, had better
30 homework completion, better school behavior and higher test
31 scores; and

32 WHEREAS, polls show that ninety-two percent (92%) of
33 Americans believe there should be organized activities for
34 children and teens during after-school hours; and

35 WHEREAS, polls show that seventy-five percent (75%) of
36 Americans are ready to either pay more taxes or to forego a tax
37 cut to provide children with good early childhood development
38 programs and quality after-school programs; and

39 WHEREAS, as working parents can attest, child care concerns
40 are not over once children are old enough to go to school: a
41 parent who is employed full time can be away from home an average
42 of two thousand four hundred (2,400) hours a year, and children
43 spend less than half of that time in school; if their children
44 participate in a quality school-age care program or another
45 organized out-of-school time activity, parents can rest easy
46 because they know that their children are safe and supervised;
47 NOW, THEREFORE,

48 **SECTION 1.** (1) There is created a task force to be known as
49 the "Mississippi After-School Initiative Task Force" to develop a
50 plan to ensure quality after-school programs for every school-age
51 child in the State of Mississippi. The task force shall make a
52 report of its findings and recommendations to the Legislature by
53 December 1, 2004, including any recommended legislation.

54 (2) The members of the task force should represent several
55 diverse areas, including but not limited to, violence prevention,
56 parents, park districts, special need populations, private
57 foundations, civic and cultural organizations, community-based
58 youth service providers, law enforcement, education, local
59 voluntary organizations, faith-based communities, health, research
60 institutions, child and youth advocacy, alcohol, tobacco and

61 substance abuse prevention and mental health. The task force
62 shall be composed of the following seventeen (17) members:

63 (a) The State Superintendent of Public Education;

64 (b) The Executive Director of the Department of Human
65 Services;

66 (c) Executive Officer of the State Department of
67 Health;

68 (d) The Chairman of the House of Representatives
69 Education Committee;

70 (e) The Chairman of the Senate Education Committee; and

71 (f) Four (4) persons from each of the three (3) Supreme
72 Court districts to be appointed by the Governor, for a total of
73 twelve (12) members;

74 (3) Appointments shall be made within thirty (30) days
75 after the effective date of this act, and, within fifteen (15)
76 days thereafter on a day to be designated by the Governor, the
77 task force shall meet and organize.

78 (4) The task force shall make an assessment of the
79 after-school services in this state, including identification of
80 the number of children and youth served in after-school programs;
81 identification of the various funding programs currently
82 supporting after-school programs; and the development of a plan
83 for coordinating after-school services and for achieving a goal of
84 providing after-school services for every school-age child in the
85 State of Mississippi.

86 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
87 and after July 1, 2004.