

By: Representative Watson

To: Universities and  
Colleges; Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 1335

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-106-31, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,  
2 TO DECREASE FROM 29 TO 26 THE MINIMUM ACT SCORE REQUIRED FOR  
3 STUDENTS TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR A SCHOLARSHIP UNDER THE MISSISSIPPI  
4 EMINENT SCHOLARS PROGRAM; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

6 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-106-31, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
7 amended as follows:

8 37-106-31. (1) There is created a Mississippi Eminent  
9 Scholars Fund, to be administered by the Mississippi Postsecondary  
10 Education Financial Assistance Board established under Section  
11 37-106-9. The board shall set the date that will serve as the  
12 deadline for applying for an award under this section and award  
13 scholarships to each Mississippi student who:

14 (a) (i) Is recognized by the merit or achievement  
15 programs of the National Merit Scholarship Corporation or the  
16 National Achievement Scholarship as a semifinalist or finalist,  
17 and has obtained a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.5  
18 calculated on a 4.0 scale in high school subjects acceptable for  
19 credit toward a diploma, after seven (7) semesters certified by  
20 the high school counselor or other authorized school official on  
21 the application, and graduation from high school verified by the  
22 institution before disbursement of award; or

23 (ii) Has scored twenty-six (26) on the American  
24 College Testing Program or its equivalent, and has obtained a  
25 minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.5 calculated on a 4.0  
26 scale after seven (7) semesters certified by the high school  
27 counselor or other authorized school official on the application,  
28 and graduation from high school verified by the institution before

29 disbursement of award, or the equivalent in high school subjects  
30 acceptable for credit toward a diploma; or

31 (iii) Has attended a home education program during  
32 grade levels 9 through 12 and has scored twenty-six (26) on the  
33 American College Testing Program or its equivalent; and

34 (iv) Has been certified by the college or  
35 university to the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial  
36 Assistance Board as a Mississippi Eminent Scholar.

37 (b) Meets the general requirements for student  
38 eligibility, except as otherwise provided in this section.

39 (c) Dependents of Mississippi residents who are on  
40 military or public service assignments away from Mississippi when  
41 such dependents live with such Mississippi residents and receive  
42 high school diplomas from non-Mississippi schools shall be  
43 exempted from certain requirements by the board.

44 (d) Files, before the deadline, an application for an  
45 award during his last year in high school, or before the  
46 expiration of the third school year succeeding the year of his  
47 high school graduation.

48 (e) Attends, on a full-time basis, any state  
49 institution of higher learning or public community or junior  
50 college, or any regionally accredited, state-approved, nonprofit  
51 four- or two-year college or university located in the State of  
52 Mississippi as listed in subsection (4)(d) of Section 37-106-29.

53 (f) Enrolls for the first time as a college student in  
54 Mississippi. Any student who earns postsecondary academic credit  
55 prior to or during the summer immediately subsequent to receiving  
56 a high school diploma, who is dually enrolled in secondary and  
57 postsecondary educational institutions, or who is enrolled in the  
58 early admission program of a postsecondary institution shall be  
59 exempt from this requirement.

60 (g) Is a resident of the State of Mississippi.  
61 Residency status for purposes of receiving grants under this

62 section shall be determined in the same manner as resident status  
63 for tuition purposes as set forth in Sections 37-103-1 through  
64 37-103-29, with the exception of Section 37-103-17.

65 (2) (a) Students who apply for awards but do not accept  
66 their initial awards may reapply to receive awards during  
67 subsequent application periods occurring before the expiration of  
68 the third school year succeeding the year of their high school  
69 graduation. Similarly, students who receive initial awards and  
70 who later do not accept renewal awards may reapply to receive  
71 awards during subsequent application periods occurring before the  
72 expiration of the third school year succeeding the year of their  
73 high school graduation. The institution shall accept  
74 reinstatement applications according to dates set by the  
75 Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board and  
76 shall determine the eligibility of such applicants in the same  
77 manner as first-time applicants, except that students who apply  
78 pursuant to this paragraph shall be required to have maintained  
79 the equivalent of a 3.5 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0  
80 scale for all college work attempted. The board shall not make  
81 awards to reinstatement applicants who submit applications that  
82 are received after the deadline set by the Mississippi  
83 Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board.

84 (b) The board shall create a renewal application for  
85 each student who received the award for one or more terms during  
86 the immediately preceding academic year.

87 (3) (a) The annual award to a student shall be up to Two  
88 Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500.00) for tuition and fees.  
89 Payment of the Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant shall be made  
90 payable to the recipient and the educational institution and  
91 mailed directly to the institution, to be applied first to  
92 tuition.

93 (b) Within six (6) weeks of the end of regular  
94 registration, inclusive of a drop-add period, institutions shall

95 certify to the board the eligibility status of each awarded  
96 student. The eligibility status of each student to receive a  
97 disbursement shall be determined by each institution as of this  
98 date. Institutions shall not be required to reevaluate a  
99 student's eligibility status after this date for purposes of  
100 amending eligibility determinations previously made. However, an  
101 institution shall be requested to make refunds for students who  
102 receive award disbursements and terminate enrollment for any  
103 reason during the academic term when an institution's refund  
104 policies permit a student to receive a refund under the  
105 circumstances.

106 (c) Institutions shall certify to the board the amount  
107 of funds disbursed to each student and shall remit to the board  
108 any undisbursed advances within sixty (60) days of the end of  
109 regular registration.

110 (4) A recipient shall maintain the equivalent of a 3.5  
111 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale, or shall maintain  
112 an approved equivalent student progress evaluation plan, on at  
113 least twelve (12) hours per quarter, trimester or semester in  
114 order to be eligible for a continuation of the award. No student  
115 may receive a Mississippi Eminent Scholars Fund award for more  
116 than the equivalent semesters or quarters required to complete one  
117 (1) degree or certificate program per institution. The award may  
118 be renewed annually upon certification of eligibility by the  
119 eligible institutions that the recipient meets the necessary  
120 qualifications. If any recipient transfers from one university,  
121 community college or junior college to another, his award will be  
122 transferable, provided he is otherwise eligible for the award. If  
123 a student fails to maintain continuous enrollment, and is not  
124 granted an exception for cause by the administering agency, the  
125 student is ineligible to receive the Mississippi Eminent Scholars  
126 Grant during the following semester or trimester or term of the  
127 regular academic year.

128           (5) The board may conduct its own annual audits of any  
129 institution participating in the Mississippi Eminent Scholars  
130 Grant Program. The board may suspend or revoke an institution's  
131 eligibility to receive future monies under the program if it finds  
132 that the institution has not complied with the provisions of this  
133 section.

134           (6) For purposes of this section, certificated shall mean,  
135 but not be limited to, all postsecondary vocational programs in  
136 eligible institutions as identified in subsection (4)(d) of  
137 Section 37-106-29.

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