

By: Senator(s) Moffatt, Robertson

To: Rules

SENATE BILL NO. 2825

1 AN ACT TO DESIGNATE THE AMERICAN ALLIGATOR AS THE STATE  
2 REPTILE; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

4 WHEREAS, the American Alligator is found in the southeastern  
5 United States, from Texas to Florida, and from South Carolina to  
6 the Gulf Coast. They are found in both natural and manmade  
7 freshwater lakes, ponds, rivers and wetland areas; and

8 WHEREAS, the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries  
9 and Parks estimates that there are 32,000-38,000 alligators and  
10 about 408,000 acres of alligator habitat in Mississippi.  
11 Alligator reports have come from as far north as Coahoma,  
12 Lafayette and Itawamba Counties, and as far south as the coastal  
13 counties of Jackson, Harrison and Hancock; and

14 WHEREAS, alligators are important to the ecology of their  
15 habitat. During droughts, they dig holes, or dens, which provide  
16 water for the wildlife community. The alligators construct these  
17 "gator holes" with their large sweeping tails that retain water  
18 during periods of drought. This provides water and foraging space  
19 for many other species, such as wading birds; and

20 WHEREAS, alligators are unique in that, unlike other  
21 reptiles, female alligators will protect their young for up to two  
22 years after hatching. We feel this sets a good example for all  
23 animal parents. They have proven themselves to be highly  
24 resilient to both natural and induced mortality. In fact, they  
25 are known to have existed before the dinosaurs--more than two  
26 hundred million years ago; and

27           WHEREAS, alligators are one of the few animals that has been  
28 listed as endangered and rallied back again.

29           **SECTION 1.** The American Alligator (Alligator  
30 Mississippiensis) is hereby designated the State Reptile of  
31 Mississippi.

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