

By: Representative Fleming

To: Education

## HOUSE BILL NO. 159

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, 2005, 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 after  
75 the effective date of this act, and, within fifteen (15) days  
76 thereafter on a day to be designated by the Governor, the task  
77 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, 2005.