S. B. No. 2060

SENATE BILL NO. 2060

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, alligators are unique in that, unlike other reptiles, female alligators will protect their young for up to two years after hatching. We feel this sets a good example for all animal parents. They have proven themselves to be highly resilient to both natural and induced mortality. In fact, they are known to have existed before the dinosaurs--more than 200 million years ago; and
WHEREAS, alligators are one of the few animals that have been listed as endangered and rallied back again.

SECTION 1. The American Alligator (Alligator mississippiensis) is hereby designated the State Reptile of Mississippi.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2005.