

By: Senator(s) Frazier, Burton, Dearing,  
Harden, Jackson (11th)

To: Public Health and  
Welfare

SENATE BILL NO. 2556  
(As Sent to Governor)

1 AN ACT TO DIRECT LEGISLATIVE DRAFTING OFFICES AND STATE  
2 AGENCIES TO USE CERTAIN RESPECTFUL REFERENCES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH  
3 DISABILITIES IN THE PREPARATION OF LEGISLATION AND RULES; AND FOR  
4 RELATED PURPOSES.

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

6 **SECTION 1.** (1) The Legislature recognizes that language  
7 used in reference to individuals with disabilities shapes and  
8 reflects society's attitudes towards people with disabilities.  
9 Many of the terms currently used diminish the humanity and natural  
10 condition of having a disability. Certain terms are demeaning and  
11 create an invisible barrier to inclusion as equal community  
12 members. The Legislature finds it necessary to clarify preferred  
13 language for new and revised laws and rules by requiring the use  
14 of terminology that puts the person before the disability.

15 (2) The legislative drafting offices of the House and Senate  
16 are directed to avoid all references to the terms "disabled,"  
17 "developmentally disabled," "mentally disabled," "mentally ill,"  
18 "mentally retarded," "handicapped," "cripple" and "crippled," in  
19 any new statute, memorial or resolution, and to change those  
20 references in any existing statute, memorial or resolution as  
21 sections including those references are otherwise amended by law.  
22 The drafting offices are directed to replace the terms referenced  
23 above as appropriate with the following revised terminology:  
24 "individuals with disabilities," "individuals with developmental  
25 disabilities," "individuals with mental illness" and "individuals  
26 with mental retardation."

27 (3) No statute, memorial or resolution is invalid because it  
28 does not comply with this section.

29           (4) All state agency orders creating new rules, or amending  
30 existing rules, shall be formulated in accordance with the  
31 requirements of subsection (1) of this section regarding the use  
32 of respectful language.

33           (5) No agency rule is invalid because it does not comply  
34 with this section.

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