

By: Representatives Brown,  
Watson

To: Appropriations

## HOUSE BILL NO. 22

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH WITHIN THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR A  
2 SEPARATE OFFICE TO BE KNOWN AS THE OFFICE OF DISASTER ASSISTANCE  
3 COORDINATION; TO PROVIDE THAT THE OFFICE SHALL BE THE PRIMARY  
4 ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR COORDINATING INFORMATION REGARDING DISASTER  
5 ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY FEDERAL AGENCIES OTHER THAN THE FEDERAL  
6 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA), BY STATE AGENCIES OTHER THAN  
7 THE MISSISSIPPI EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (MEMA), AND BY OTHER  
8 PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ENTITIES THAT PROVIDE VARIOUS TYPES OF  
9 ASSISTANCE AND BENEFITS TO VICTIMS OF MAJOR NATURAL DISASTERS; TO  
10 PROVIDE THAT THE OFFICE SHALL SERVE AS A SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT  
11 WHERE INDIVIDUALS AND PUBLIC ENTITIES THAT ARE VICTIMS OF MAJOR  
12 DISASTERS MAY OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT ALL FEDERAL AND STATE  
13 PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE ASSISTANCE AND BENEFITS TO DISASTER VICTIMS  
14 OTHER THAN THOSE PROVIDED BY FEMA OR MEMA, AS WELL AS INFORMATION  
15 ABOUT THE AVAILABILITY OF DISASTER-RELATED IN-KIND DONATIONS BY  
16 PRIVATE ENTITIES AND INDIVIDUALS; TO PROVIDE THAT THE OFFICE SHALL  
17 PROVIDE VICTIMS OF MAJOR DISASTERS WITH ALL OF THE FORMS AND  
18 MATERIALS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO RECEIVE THE BENEFITS OF THOSE  
19 DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AND DISASTER-RELATED IN-KIND  
20 DONATIONS, AND PROVIDE THEM WITH ASSISTANCE IN COMPLETING AND  
21 FILING THE APPLICATIONS FOR THOSE PROGRAMS AND IN-KIND DONATIONS;  
22 TO PROVIDE THAT THE OFFICE SHALL COORDINATE AND COOPERATE WITH  
23 FEMA, MEMA, OTHER FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES AND OTHER PUBLIC AND  
24 PRIVATE ENTITIES IN PROVIDING AND SHARING INFORMATION, FORMS AND  
25 MATERIALS RELATED TO DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AND  
26 DISASTER-RELATED IN-KIND DONATIONS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

28 **SECTION 1.** The Legislature finds and declares the following:  
29 When a major natural disaster such as Hurricane Katrina occurs in  
30 Mississippi, there are various types of assistance that are  
31 available to individuals and public entities through the federal  
32 and state governments to help them recover from the disaster. The  
33 majority of that assistance comes from the federal government, and  
34 most of the federal assistance is provided through the Federal  
35 Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). At the state level, most of  
36 the assistance is provided through the Mississippi Emergency  
37 Management Agency (MEMA). However, there are also programs in  
38 other federal and state agencies that provide assistance and  
39 benefits to disaster victims, as well as disaster assistance

40 programs run by public and private entities and disaster-related  
41 in-kind donations made by private entities and individuals.  
42 Because these other disaster assistance programs and in-kind  
43 donations are spread out among a number of agencies and entities,  
44 disaster victims sometimes are not aware of the existence of these  
45 programs and in-kind donations other than those provided through  
46 FEMA and MEMA. After a disaster has occurred, it would be very  
47 beneficial for the victims of the disaster to have a single entity  
48 in the state, one point of contact, where individuals and public  
49 entities would be able to obtain information about those other  
50 disaster assistance programs and disaster-related in-kind  
51 donations, obtain all of the forms and materials necessary in  
52 order to receive the benefits of those programs and in-kind  
53 donations, and receive assistance in completing and filing the  
54 applications for those programs and in-kind donations.

55 **SECTION 2.** There is established within the Office of the  
56 Governor a separate and distinct office to be known as the Office  
57 of Disaster Assistance Coordination. The office shall be the  
58 primary entity responsible for coordinating information regarding  
59 disaster assistance provided by federal agencies other than the  
60 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), by state agencies  
61 other than the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), and  
62 by other public and private entities that provide various types of  
63 assistance and benefits to victims of major natural disasters.  
64 The duties and responsibilities of the office shall be as follows:

65 (a) To serve as a single point of contact where  
66 individuals and public entities that are victims of major  
67 disasters may obtain information about all federal and state  
68 programs that provide assistance and benefits to disaster victims  
69 other than those provided by FEMA or MEMA, as well as information  
70 about the availability of disaster-related in-kind donations by  
71 private entities and individuals;

72           (b) To provide victims of major disasters with all of  
73 the forms and materials necessary in order to receive the benefits  
74 of those disaster assistance programs and disaster-related in-kind  
75 donations, and provide them with assistance in completing and  
76 filing the applications for those programs and in-kind donations;

77           (c) To coordinate and cooperate with FEMA, MEMA, other  
78 federal and state agencies and other public and private entities  
79 in providing and sharing information, forms and materials related  
80 to disaster assistance programs and disaster-related in-kind  
81 donations;

82           (d) To work with MEMA in coordinating information,  
83 revenues, programs and assistance made available in Mississippi by  
84 FEMA, whether directly through FEMA or through MEMA; and

85           (e) To perform such other duties relating to disaster  
86 assistance information as may be prescribed by the Governor.

87           **SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
88 and after its passage.