

By: Representative Markham

To: Universities and
Colleges; Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 204

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-106-29, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,
2 TO INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF GRANTS UNDER THE MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT
3 TUITION ASSISTANCE GRANT (MTAG) PROGRAM; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

5 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-106-29, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
6 amended as follows:

7 37-106-29. (1) There is established the Mississippi
8 Resident Tuition Assistance Grant Program for college or
9 university freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors to be
10 administered by the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial
11 Assistance Board established under Section 37-106-9, Mississippi
12 Code of 1972, which shall set the dates and deadlines for applying
13 for an award under this section. The board shall establish such
14 rules and regulations as it deems necessary and proper to carry
15 out the purposes and intent of this section.

16 (2) The college or university shall approve grants to
17 full-time freshmen, sophomore, junior and senior Mississippi
18 residents who meet the general requirements for student
19 eligibility as provided in subsection (4) of this section.

20 (3) Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grants shall be
21 for Mississippi students from any Mississippi family whose prior
22 year adjusted gross income (AGI) exceeds the maximum allowed to
23 qualify for full Pell Grant eligibility and campus-based federal
24 aid. Those Mississippi students receiving less than the full Pell
25 Grant award, as determined by the institution, shall receive a
26 Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant in an amount not to
27 exceed the maximum Pell Grant allowable for that individual

28 student. The award shall be applied to tuition, rooms and meals,
29 books, materials and fees not to exceed One Thousand Two Hundred
30 Dollars (\$1,200.00) for junior and senior students attending state
31 institutions of higher learning in Mississippi or four-year
32 regionally accredited, state-approved, nonprofit colleges and
33 universities in Mississippi, and Six Hundred Dollars (\$600.00) for
34 freshmen and sophomores attending state institutions of higher
35 learning or public community or junior colleges in Mississippi, or
36 regionally accredited, state-approved, nonprofit two-year or
37 four-year colleges in Mississippi, which will be prorated per
38 term, semester or quarter of the academic year for costs of
39 attendance, calculated according to the formula specified in
40 subsection (8) of this section.

41 (4) The general requirements for initial eligibility of
42 students for Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grants
43 consist of the following:

44 (a) Member of a Mississippi family whose prior year
45 adjusted gross income (AGI) exceeds the maximum allowed to qualify
46 for Pell Grant eligibility and campus-based federal aid.

47 (b) Acceptance for enrollment at any state institution
48 of higher learning or public community or junior college located
49 in Mississippi, or any regionally accredited, state-approved,
50 nonprofit four- or two-year college or university located in
51 Mississippi as listed in subsection (d) of this subsection: (i)
52 a minimum grade point average of 2.5 calculated on a 4.0 scale
53 after seven (7) semesters certified by the high school counselor
54 or other authorized school official on the application and
55 graduation from high school verified by the institution before
56 disbursement of award and has scored fifteen (15) on the American
57 College Testing Program * * *; however, * * * any student entering
58 a vocational or technical program of study, or who has
59 satisfactorily completed the General Education Development Test
60 and attends a community or junior college will not be required to

61 have a test score under the American College Testing Program
62 except those students enrolled in courses of academic study. Any
63 student currently enrolled in any qualified institution shall have
64 to only meet the same requirements as students who are applying
65 for a renewal award.

66 (c) Resident status for purposes of receiving grants
67 under this section shall be determined in the same manner as
68 resident status for tuition purposes as set forth in Sections
69 37-103-1 through 37-103-29, with the exception of 37-103-17.

70 (d) Must attend one (1) of the following institutions
71 of higher learning: Alcorn State University, Delta State
72 University, Jackson State University, Mississippi State
73 University, Mississippi University for Women, Mississippi Valley
74 State University, University of Mississippi, University of
75 Southern Mississippi, Coahoma Community College, Copiah-Lincoln
76 Community College, East Central Community College, East
77 Mississippi Community College, Hinds Community College, Holmes
78 Community College, Itawamba Community College, Jones County Junior
79 College, Meridian Community College, Mississippi Delta Community
80 College, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, Northeast
81 Mississippi Community College, Northwest Mississippi Community
82 College, Pearl River Community College, Southwest Mississippi
83 Community College, Belhaven College, Blue Mountain College,
84 Millsaps College, Mississippi College, Rust College, Tougaloo
85 College, William Carey College, Mary Holmes College, Magnolia
86 Bible College and Wood College.

87 (5) By accepting a Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance
88 Grant, the student is attesting to the accuracy, completeness and
89 correctness of information provided to demonstrate the student's
90 eligibility. Falsification of such information shall result in
91 the denial of any pending grant and revocation of any award
92 currently held to the extent that no further payments shall be
93 made. Any student knowingly making false statements in order to

94 receive a grant shall be guilty of a misdemeanor punishable, upon
95 conviction thereof, by a fine of up to Ten Thousand Dollars
96 (\$10,000.00), a prison sentence of up to one (1) year in the
97 county jail, or both, and shall be required to return all
98 Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grants wrongfully
99 obtained.

100 (6) Eligibility for renewal of Mississippi Resident Tuition
101 Assistance Grants shall be evaluated at the end of each semester,
102 or term, of each academic year. As a condition for renewal, a
103 student shall:

104 (a) Make steady academic progress toward a certificate
105 or degree, as outlined in the school Satisfactory Academic
106 Progress Standards and certified by the institution's registrar.

107 (b) Maintain continuous enrollment for not less than
108 two (2) semesters or three (3) quarters in each successive
109 academic year, unless granted an exception for cause by the
110 administering agency; examples of cause may include student
111 participation in a cooperative program, internship program or
112 foreign study program. If a student fails to maintain continuous
113 enrollment, and is not granted an exception for cause by the
114 administering agency, the student is ineligible to receive the
115 Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant during the following
116 semester or trimester or term of the regular academic year.

117 (c) Have a cumulative grade point average of at least
118 2.50 calculated on a 4.0 scale at the end of each semester or
119 trimester or term.

120 (7) Each student, each year, must complete a Free
121 Application for Federal Student Aid form or a Statement of
122 Certification as designed by the administering board to determine
123 his/her eligibility for a Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance
124 Grant.

125 (8) (a) The amount of the Mississippi Resident Tuition
126 Assistance Grant awarded to any one (1) student, up to the maximum

127 amount provided in subsection (3) of this section, shall be the
128 difference of the student's cost of attendance at his accredited
129 college of choice and the amount of federal aid such student may
130 receive, not to supplant but to supplement the amount of any
131 federal aid awarded to the student. Cost of attendance is the
132 tuition and fees of the applicable institution plus an allowance
133 for room and meals and books and materials.

134 (b) Payment of the Mississippi Resident Tuition
135 Assistance Grant shall be made payable to the recipient and the
136 educational institution and mailed directly to the institution, to
137 be applied first to tuition.

138 (9) In order for an institution to remain eligible for its
139 students to participate in the Mississippi Resident Tuition
140 Assistance Grant Program, the institution shall comply with the
141 following requirements:

142 (a) A complete and accurate roster of the eligibility
143 status of each awarded student shall be made to the board for each
144 term, semester or quarter of the academic year the student
145 receives a Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant.

146 (b) The institution is required to make refunds to the
147 Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant Fund for any funds
148 which have not been disbursed to the recipient, in the case of
149 students who have received a grant but who terminate enrollment
150 during the academic term, semester or quarter of the academic year
151 if an institution's refund policies permit a student to receive a
152 refund in such instance. The recipient shall be responsible for
153 the refund of any funds which have been disbursed by the
154 institution in such instance.

155 (c) If a student drops below full-time status but does
156 not terminate all enrollment during the term, semester or quarter
157 of the academic year no refund will be required for that term.
158 However, that student is ineligible to receive the Mississippi

159 Resident Tuition Assistance Grant during the following term,
160 semester or quarter of the regular academic year.

161 (d) The board may conduct its own annual audits of any
162 institution participating in the Mississippi Resident Tuition
163 Assistance Grant Program. The board may suspend or revoke an
164 institution's eligibility to receive future monies under the
165 program if it finds that the institution has not complied with the
166 provisions of this section. In determining a student's initial
167 eligibility, the number of prior semesters enrolled will not be
168 counted against the student.

169 (10) No student may receive a Mississippi Resident Tuition
170 Assistance Grant for more than the equivalent semesters or
171 quarters required to complete one (1) baccalaureate degree or one
172 (1) certificate or associate degree program per institution.

173 (11) Subject to the availability of funds specifically
174 appropriated therefor, it is the intent of the Legislature to
175 fully fund grant awards to eligible students. If funds are
176 insufficient to fully fund grant awards to eligible students,
177 grant awards shall be prorated among all eligible students. No
178 student shall receive any combination of student financial aid in
179 excess of the cost of attendance as defined in subsection (8)(a).

180 (12) No student receiving a Mississippi Eminent Scholars
181 Grant as provided in Section 37-106-31 shall be eligible to
182 receive the Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant pursuant
183 to Section 37-106-29 unless he is eligible for such award after
184 the Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant has been considered by the
185 board when conducting an assessment of the financial resources
186 available to the student. In no case shall any student receive
187 any combination of student financial aid that would exceed the
188 cost of attendance, as defined in subsection (8)(a).

189 For purposes of this section, certificated shall mean, but
190 not be limited to, all postsecondary vocational programs in

191 eligible institutions as identified in subsection (4)(d) of this
192 section.

193 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
194 and after July 1, 2006.