

By: Senator(s) Burton

To: Elections

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE
FOR
SENATE BILL NO. 2309

1 AN ACT TO REQUIRE PERSONS WHO APPEAR TO VOTE IN PERSON AT A
2 POLLING PLACE OR THE REGISTRAR'S OFFICE TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES BY
3 PRESENTING CERTAIN TYPES OF IDENTIFICATION TO AN ELECTION MANAGER
4 OR THE REGISTRAR BEFORE THEY ARE ALLOWED TO VOTE; TO AMEND
5 SECTIONS 23-15-631 AND 23-15-639, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO
6 AUTHORIZE THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO TAKE CERTAIN ACTION TO ENSURE
7 THAT THE IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS OF THE HELP AMERICA VOTE ACT
8 OF 2002 ARE MET IN REGARD TO ABSENTEE BALLOTS; TO AMEND SECTIONS
9 23-15-11, 23-15-541 AND 23-15-719, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, IN
10 CONFORMITY THERETO; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

12 **SECTION 1.** (1) Each person who shall appear to vote in
13 person at a polling place or the registrar's office shall be
14 required to identify himself or herself to an election manager or
15 the registrar by presenting current and valid photo
16 identification, a government document that shows the name and
17 address of the person or, a social security card that shows the
18 name of the person, before such person shall be allowed to vote.

19 (2) The identification required by subsection (1) of this
20 section shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- 21 (a) A current and valid Mississippi driver's license;
- 22 (b) A current and valid identification card issued by a
23 branch, department, agency or entity of the State of Mississippi;
- 24 (c) A current and valid United States passport;
- 25 (d) A current and valid employee identification card
26 containing a photograph of the elector and issued by any branch,
27 department, agency or entity of the United States government, the
28 State of Mississippi, or any county, municipality, board,
29 authority or other entity of this state;

30 (e) A current and valid employee identification card
31 containing a photograph of the elector and issued by any employer
32 of the elector in the ordinary course of the employer's business;

33 (f) A current and valid student identification card
34 containing a photograph of the elector from any public or private
35 college, university, or postgraduate, technical or professional
36 school located within the State of Mississippi;

37 (g) A current and valid Mississippi license to carry a
38 pistol or revolver;

39 (h) A current and valid pilot's license issued by the
40 Federal Aviation Administration or other authorized agency of the
41 United States;

42 (i) A current and valid United States military
43 identification card; and

44 (j) Official voter registration card.

45 (3) Any person who utilizes the provisions of this section
46 to intimidate a voter, or to prevent from voting a person who is
47 otherwise qualified to vote, shall, upon conviction, be sentenced
48 to pay a fine of not less than Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000.00),
49 or by imprisonment for not less than one (1) year nor more than
50 five (5) years, or both.

51 **SECTION 2.** Section 23-15-631, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
52 amended as follows:

53 23-15-631. (1) The registrar shall enclose with each ballot
54 provided to an absent elector separate printed instructions
55 furnished by him containing the following:

56 (a) All absentee voters, excepting those with temporary
57 or permanent physical disabilities or those who are sixty-five
58 (65) years of age or older, who mark their ballots in the county
59 of the residence shall use the registrar of that county as the
60 witness. Said absentee voter shall come to the office of the
61 registrar and neither the registrar nor his deputy shall be

62 required to go out of the registrar's office to serve as an
63 attesting witness.

64 (b) Upon receipt of the enclosed ballot, you will not
65 mark same except in view or sight of the attesting witness. In
66 the sight or view of the attesting witness, mark the ballot
67 according to instructions.

68 (c) After marking the ballot, fill out and sign the
69 "ELECTOR'S CERTIFICATE" on back of the envelope so that the
70 signature shall be across the flap of the envelope so as to insure
71 the integrity of the ballot. All absent electors shall have the
72 attesting witness sign the "ATTESTING WITNESS CERTIFICATE" across
73 the flap on back of the envelope. Place necessary postage on the
74 envelope and deposit it in the post office or some government
75 receptacle provided for deposit of mail so that the absent
76 elector's ballot, excepting presidential absentee ballots, will
77 reach the registrar in which your precinct is located not later
78 than 5:00 p.m. on the day preceding the date of the election, or
79 by personally delivering such ballot to the registrar's office not
80 later than 12:00 noon on the Saturday immediately preceding
81 elections held on Tuesday, the Thursday immediately preceding
82 elections held on Saturday, and the second day immediately
83 preceding elections held on other days.

84 Any notary public, United States postmaster, assistant United
85 States postmaster, United States postal supervisor, clerk in
86 charge of a contract postal station, or any officer having
87 authority to administer an oath or take an acknowledgment may be
88 an attesting witness; provided, however, that in the case of an
89 absent elector who is temporarily or permanently physically
90 disabled, the attesting witness may be any person eighteen (18)
91 years of age or older and such person is not required to have the
92 authority to administer an oath. If a postmaster, assistant
93 postmaster, postal supervisor, or clerk in charge of a contract
94 postal station acts as an attesting witness, his signature on the

95 elector's certificate must be authenticated by the cancellation
96 stamp of their respective post offices. If one or the other
97 officers herein named acts as attesting witness, his signature on
98 the elector's certificate, together with his title and address,
99 but no seal, shall be required. Any affidavits made by an absent
100 elector who is in the Armed Forces may be executed before a
101 commissioned officer, warrant officer, or noncommissioned officer
102 not lower in grade than sergeant rating or any person authorized
103 to administer oaths.

104 (d) When the application accompanies the ballot it
105 shall not be returned in the same envelope as the ballot but shall
106 be returned in a separate preaddressed envelope provided by the
107 registrar.

108 (e) A person who is a candidate for public office may
109 not be an attesting witness for any absentee ballot upon which the
110 person's name appears.

111 (f) Any voter casting an absentee ballot who declares
112 that he requires assistance to vote by reason of blindness,
113 temporary or permanent physical disability or inability to read or
114 write, shall be entitled to receive assistance in the marking of
115 his absentee ballot and in completing the affidavit on the
116 absentee ballot envelope. The voter may be given assistance by
117 anyone of the voter's choice other than a candidate whose name
118 appears on the absentee ballot being marked, or the voter's
119 employer, or agent of that employer. In order to ensure the
120 integrity of the ballot, any person who provides assistance to an
121 absentee voter shall be required to sign and complete the
122 "Certificate of Person Providing Voter Assistance" on the absentee
123 ballot envelope.

124 (2) The Secretary of State shall prepare instructions on how
125 absent voters may comply with the identification requirements of
126 the Help America Vote Act of 2002, which shall be provided to the
127 registrar and enclosed with each absentee ballot.

128 (3) The foregoing instructions required to be provided by
129 the registrar to the elector shall also constitute the substantive
130 law pertaining to the handling of absentee ballots by the elector
131 and registrar.

132 **SECTION 3.** Section 23-15-639, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
133 amended as follows:

134 23-15-639. (1) At the close of the regular balloting and at
135 the close of the polls, the election managers of each voting
136 precinct shall first take the envelopes containing the absentee
137 ballots of such electors from the box, and the name, address and
138 precinct inscribed on each such envelope shall be announced by the
139 election managers. The signature on the application shall then be
140 compared with the signature on the back of the envelope. If it
141 corresponds and the affidavit, if one is required, is sufficient
142 and the election managers find that the applicant is a registered
143 and qualified voter or otherwise qualified to vote, and that he
144 has not appeared in person and voted at such election, the
145 envelope shall then be opened and the ballot removed from the
146 envelope, without its being unfolded, or permitted to be unfolded
147 or examined. Having observed and found the ballot to be regular
148 as far as can be observed from its official endorsement, the
149 election managers shall deposit it in the ballot box with the
150 other ballots before counting any ballots and enter the voter's
151 name in the receipt book provided for that purpose and mark
152 "VOTED" in the pollbook or poll list as if he had been present and
153 voted in person. If voting machines are used, all absentee
154 ballots shall be placed in the ballot box before any ballots are
155 counted, and the election managers in each precinct shall
156 immediately count such absentee ballots and add them to the votes
157 cast in the voting machine or device.

158 (2) The election managers shall also take such action as may
159 be prescribed by the Secretary of State to ensure compliance with

160 the identification requirements of the Help America Vote Act of
161 2002.

162 **SECTION 4.** Section 23-15-11, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
163 amended as follows:

164 23-15-11. Every inhabitant of this state, except idiots and
165 insane persons, who is a citizen of the United States of America,
166 eighteen (18) years old and upwards, who has resided in this state
167 for thirty (30) days and for thirty (30) days in the county in
168 which he offers to vote, and for thirty (30) days in the
169 incorporated city or town in which he offers to vote, and who
170 shall have been duly registered as an elector pursuant to Section
171 23-15-33, and who has never been convicted of any crime listed in
172 Section 241, Mississippi Constitution of 1890, shall be a
173 qualified elector in and for the county, municipality and voting
174 precinct of his residence, and shall be entitled to vote at any
175 election upon compliance with Section 1 of Senate Bill No. _____,
176 2006 Regular Session. Any person who will be eighteen (18) years
177 of age or older on or before the date of the general election and
178 who is duly registered to vote not less than thirty (30) days
179 prior to the primary election associated with such general
180 election, may vote in such primary election even though such
181 person has not reached his or her eighteenth (18th) birthday at
182 the time such person offers to vote at such primary election. No
183 others than those above included shall be entitled, or shall be
184 allowed, to vote at any election.

185 **SECTION 5.** Section 23-15-541, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
186 amended as follows:

187 23-15-541. At all elections, the polls shall be opened at
188 seven o'clock in the morning and be kept open until seven o'clock
189 in the evening and no longer. Upon the opening of the polls, and
190 not before, the managers of the election shall designate two (2)
191 of their number, other than the manager theretofore designated to
192 receive the blank ballots, who shall thereupon be known

193 respectively as the initialing manager and the alternate
194 initialing manager. The alternate initialing manager, in the
195 absence of the initialing manager, shall perform all of the duties
196 and undertake all of the responsibilities of the initialing
197 manager. When any person entitled to vote shall appear to vote,
198 the managers shall identify the voter by requiring the voter to
199 submit identification as required by Section 1 of Senate Bill No.
200 ____, 2006 Regular Session, and then such person shall * * * sign
201 his name in a receipt book or booklet provided for that purpose
202 and to be used at that election only and said receipt book or
203 booklet shall be used in lieu of the list of voters who have voted
204 formerly made by the managers or clerks; whereupon and not before,
205 the initialing manager or, in his absence, the alternate
206 initialing manager shall indorse his initials on the back of an
207 official blank ballot, prepared in accordance with law, and at
208 such place on the back of the ballot that the initials may be seen
209 after the ballot has been marked and folded, and when so indorsed
210 he shall deliver it to the voter, which ballot the voter shall
211 mark in the manner provided by law, which when done the voter
212 shall deliver the same to the initialing manager or, in his
213 absence, to the alternate initialing manager, in the presence of
214 the others, and the manager shall see that the ballot so delivered
215 bears on the back thereof the genuine initials of the initialing
216 manager, or alternate initialing manager, and if so, but not
217 otherwise, the ballot shall be put into the ballot box; and when
218 so done one (1) of the managers or a duly appointed clerk shall
219 make the proper entry on the pollbook. If the voter is unable to
220 write his name on the receipt book, a manager or clerk shall note
221 on the back of the ballot that it was receipted for by his
222 assistance.

223 **SECTION 6.** Section 23-15-719, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
224 amended as follows:

258 (Registrar) _____

259 (Registrar)"

260 After the completion of the requirements of this section, the
261 elector shall deliver the envelope containing the ballot to the
262 registrar.

263 (2) If the voter has received assistance in marking his
264 ballot, the person providing the assistance shall complete the
265 following form which shall be printed on the back of the envelope
266 containing the applicant's ballot:

267 "CERTIFICATE OF PERSON PROVIDING VOTER ASSISTANCE

268 (To be completed only if the voter has received assistance in
269 marking the enclosed ballot.) I hereby certify that the
270 above-named voter declared to me that he or she is blind,
271 temporarily or permanently physically disabled, or cannot read or
272 write, and that the voter requested that I assist the voter in
273 marking the enclosed absentee ballot. I hereby certify that the
274 ballot preferences on the enclosed ballot are those communicated
275 by the voter to me, and that I have marked the enclosed ballot in
276 accordance with the voter's instructions.

277 _____
278 Signature of person providing assistance

279 _____
280 Printed name of person providing assistance

281 _____
282 Address of person providing assistance

283 _____
284 Date and time assistance provided

285 _____
286 Family relationship to voter (if any)"

287 (3) The envelope used pursuant to this section shall not
288 contain the form prescribed by Section 23-15-635.

289 **SECTION 7.** The Attorney General of the State of Mississippi
290 shall submit this act, immediately upon approval by the Governor,

291 or upon approval by the Legislature subsequent to a veto, to the
292 Attorney General of the United States or to the United States
293 District Court for the District of Columbia in accordance with the
294 provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended and
295 extended.

296 **SECTION 8.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
297 and after the date it is effectuated under Section 5 of the Voting
298 Rights Act of 1965, as amended and extended.