

By: Representative Martinson

To: Education

HOUSE BILL NO. 1073

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-106-31, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,
2 TO DELETE THE REQUIREMENT THAT A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT'S GRADE POINT
3 AVERAGE BE CONSIDERED WHEN DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY FOR A
4 SCHOLARSHIP THROUGH THE MISSISSIPPI EMINENT SCHOLARS PROGRAM; AND
5 FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

7 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-106-31, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
8 amended as follows:

9 37-106-31. (1) There is created a Mississippi Eminent
10 Scholars Fund, to be administered by the Mississippi Postsecondary
11 Education Financial Assistance Board established under Section
12 37-106-9. The board shall set the date that will serve as the
13 deadline for applying for an award under this section and award
14 scholarships to each Mississippi student who:

15 (a) (i) Is recognized by the merit or achievement
16 programs of the National Merit Scholarship Corporation or the
17 National Achievement Scholarship as a semifinalist or
18 finalist * * * and graduation from high school verified by the
19 institution before disbursement of award; or

20 (ii) Has scored twenty-nine (29) on the American
21 College Testing Program or its equivalent * * * and graduation
22 from high school verified by the institution before disbursement
23 of award * * *; or

24 (iii) Has attended a home education program during
25 grade levels 9 through 12 and has scored twenty-nine (29) on the
26 American College Testing Program or its equivalent; and

27 (iv) Has been certified by the college or
28 university to the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial
29 Assistance Board as a Mississippi Eminent Scholar.

30 (b) Meets the general requirements for student
31 eligibility, except as otherwise provided in this section.

32 (c) Dependents of Mississippi residents who are on
33 military or public service assignments away from Mississippi when
34 such dependents live with such Mississippi residents and receive
35 high school diplomas from non-Mississippi schools shall be
36 exempted.

37 (d) Files, before the deadline, an application for an
38 award during his last year in high school, or before the
39 expiration of the third school year succeeding the year of his
40 high school graduation.

41 (e) Attends, on a full-time basis, any state
42 institution of higher learning or public community or junior
43 college, or any regionally accredited, state-approved, nonprofit
44 four- or two-year college or university located in the State of
45 Mississippi as listed in subsection (4)(d) of Section 37-106-29.

46 (f) Enrolls for the first time as a college student in
47 Mississippi. Any student who earns postsecondary academic credit
48 prior to or during the summer immediately subsequent to receiving
49 a high school diploma, who is dually enrolled in secondary and
50 postsecondary educational institutions, or who is enrolled in the
51 early admission program of a postsecondary institution shall be
52 exempt from this requirement.

53 (g) Is a resident of the State of Mississippi.
54 Residency status for purposes of receiving grants under this
55 section shall be determined in the same manner as resident status
56 for tuition purposes as set forth in Sections 37-103-1 through
57 37-103-29, with the exception of Section 37-103-17.

58 (2) (a) Students who apply for awards but do not accept
59 their initial awards may reapply to receive awards during

60 subsequent application periods occurring before the expiration of
61 the third school year succeeding the year of their high school
62 graduation. Similarly, students who receive initial awards and
63 who later do not accept renewal awards may reapply to receive
64 awards during subsequent application periods occurring before the
65 expiration of the third school year succeeding the year of their
66 high school graduation. The institution shall accept
67 reinstatement applications according to dates set by the
68 Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board and
69 shall determine the eligibility of such applicants in the same
70 manner as first-time applicants, except that students who apply
71 pursuant to this paragraph shall be required to have maintained
72 the equivalent of a 3.5 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0
73 scale for all college work attempted. The board shall not make
74 awards to reinstatement applicants who submit applications that
75 are received after the deadline set by the Mississippi
76 Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board.

77 (b) The board shall create a renewal application for
78 each student who received the award for one or more terms during
79 the immediately preceding academic year.

80 (3) (a) The annual award to a student shall be up to Two
81 Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500.00) for tuition and fees.
82 Payment of the Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant shall be made
83 payable to the recipient and the educational institution and
84 mailed directly to the institution, to be applied first to
85 tuition.

86 (b) Within six (6) weeks of the end of regular
87 registration, inclusive of a drop-add period, institutions shall
88 certify to the board the eligibility status of each awarded
89 student. The eligibility status of each student to receive a
90 disbursement shall be determined by each institution as of this
91 date. Institutions shall not be required to reevaluate a
92 student's eligibility status after this date for purposes of

93 amending eligibility determinations previously made. However, an
94 institution shall be requested to make refunds for students who
95 receive award disbursements and terminate enrollment for any
96 reason during the academic term when an institution's refund
97 policies permit a student to receive a refund under the
98 circumstances.

99 (c) Institutions shall certify to the board the amount
100 of funds disbursed to each student and shall remit to the board
101 any undisbursed advances within sixty (60) days of the end of
102 regular registration.

103 (4) A recipient shall maintain the equivalent of a 3.5
104 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale, or shall maintain
105 an approved equivalent student progress evaluation plan, on at
106 least twelve (12) hours per quarter, trimester or semester in
107 order to be eligible for a continuation of the award. No student
108 may receive a Mississippi Eminent Scholars Fund award for more
109 than the equivalent semesters or quarters required to complete one
110 (1) degree or certificate program per institution. The award may
111 be renewed annually upon certification of eligibility by the
112 eligible institutions that the recipient meets the necessary
113 qualifications. If any recipient transfers from one university,
114 community college or junior college to another, his award will be
115 transferable, provided he is otherwise eligible for the award. If
116 a student fails to maintain continuous enrollment, and is not
117 granted an exception for cause by the administering agency, the
118 student is ineligible to receive the Mississippi Eminent Scholars
119 Grant during the following semester or trimester or term of the
120 regular academic year.

121 (5) The board may conduct its own annual audits of any
122 institution participating in the Mississippi Eminent Scholars
123 Grant Program. The board may suspend or revoke an institution's
124 eligibility to receive future monies under the program if it finds

125 that the institution has not complied with the provisions of this
126 section.

127 (6) For purposes of this section, certificated shall mean,
128 but not be limited to, all postsecondary vocational programs in
129 eligible institutions as identified in subsection (4)(d) of
130 Section 37-106-29.

131 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
132 and after July 1, 2007.