

By: Representatives McCoy, Burnett, Hines,
Mayo, Perkins

To: Tourism; Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 1488

1 AN ACT RELATING TO CULTURAL TOURISM IN THE DELTA REGION; TO
2 REQUIRE THE LEGISLATURE AND GOVERNOR TO TAKE SUCH ACTIONS AS MAY
3 BE NECESSARY TO PROCURE FROM CONGRESS DESIGNATION OF THE
4 MISSISSIPPI DELTA REGION AS A "DELTA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA"; TO
5 AMEND SECTION 39-27-3, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO PROVIDE THAT
6 THE LEGISLATURE SHALL APPROPRIATE FUNDING TO THE MISSISSIPPI
7 DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, DIVISION OF TOURISM, FOR THE PURPOSE OF
8 PURCHASING MISSISSIPPI BLUES TRAIL MARKERS, AND TO CREATE A
9 POSITION IN THE DIVISION OF TOURISM DEDICATED TO THE BLUES TRAIL
10 MARKERS PROJECT; TO REQUIRE FUNDING TO BE APPROPRIATED TO CERTAIN
11 UNIVERSITIES FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE HERITAGE TRAILS DEVELOPMENT
12 PROGRAM; TO CREATE THE "CULTURAL HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT FUND" IN THE
13 STATE TREASURY TO PROVIDE MATCHING FUNDS FOR FEDERAL GRANTS IN
14 SUPPORT OF CULTURAL ARTS AND HERITAGE TOURISM; TO AMEND SECTION
15 57-1-59, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO REQUIRE THE MISSISSIPPI
16 DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY TO DEVELOP MECHANISMS TO ENHANCE CULTURAL
17 HERITAGE TOURISM ATTRACTIONS, TO SUPPORT THE CREATION OF
18 EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CULTURAL ARTS AND TOURISM
19 INDUSTRY, AND TO SUPPORT THE CREATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE
20 BUSINESS INCUBATORS IN THE DELTA REGION; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

22 **SECTION 1.** (1) The Legislature finds that the Mississippi
23 Delta region is a national cultural treasure. The Legislature
24 further finds that cultural heritage tourism is a rapidly growing
25 national and international industry that represents a significant
26 opportunity within the Delta; however, the absence of sufficient
27 dedicated resources to support the growth of cultural heritage
28 tourism has been a significant barrier to the Mississippi Delta's
29 ability to realize the full potential of its cultural heritage.

30 (2) It is the intent of the Legislature that this act
31 establish a cultural tourism initiative for the Delta region.

32 **SECTION 2.** For purposes of this act, the terms "Mississippi
33 Delta region," "Delta region" and "region" are defined as the
34 western section of the State of Mississippi that lies between the
35 Mississippi and Yazoo Rivers, encompassing in part or whole the
36 Counties of Bolivar, Carroll, Claiborne, Coahoma, Holmes,

37 Humphreys, Issaquena, Jefferson, Leflore, Panola, Quitman,
38 Sharkey, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tunica, Warren, Washington and
39 Yazoo.

40 **SECTION 3.** The Legislature and the Governor shall take such
41 actions as may be necessary to procure from the United States
42 Congress the designation of the Mississippi Delta region as the
43 "Delta National Heritage Area." Actions to assist in the
44 procurement of the National Heritage Area designation may include,
45 but are not necessarily limited to: working with the Mississippi
46 congressional delegation to secure the passage of designation
47 legislation; aiding in the collaboration of interested local
48 government officials, organizations and individual citizens groups
49 in the Delta; and fostering a cooperative spirit among the
50 different communities within the region.

51 **SECTION 4.** Section 39-27-3, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
52 amended as follows:

53 39-27-3. (1) The commission shall designate specific sites
54 for erection of appropriate "Mississippi Blues Trail" markers to
55 offer to tourists and targeted groups a structured tour of
56 Mississippi blues historical sites and performance venues. The
57 commission shall be authorized to purchase appropriate Mississippi
58 Blues Trail markers and related interpretive materials. The
59 Legislature shall appropriate annually to the Division of Tourism
60 of the Mississippi Development Authority no less than Two Million
61 Dollars (\$2,000,000.00) in fiscal years 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and
62 2012 for purchasing the markers and related materials. The texts
63 for the Mississippi Blues Trail markers shall be approved by the
64 commission. The Mississippi Department of Transportation shall
65 cooperate with the commission by erecting and maintaining the
66 markers that have been approved by the commission.

67 (2) There is created within the Division of Tourism of the
68 Mississippi Development Authority a full-time staff position to be
69 dedicated to the creation of the Mississippi Blues Trail markers.

70 The staff person employed in this position must devote his entire
71 attention to researching and writing the texts for the Mississippi
72 Blues Trail markers and the creation of interpretive materials.

73 **SECTION 5.** The Legislature shall provide sufficient funding
74 to support and expand the functions of the Delta Center for
75 Culture and Learning at Delta State University, Mississippi Valley
76 State University, Tougaloo College and Alcorn State University.
77 Any funding provided by the Legislature for such purposes must be
78 allocated to employ dedicated staff and to provide for graduate
79 assistants who will provide support to the Mississippi Development
80 Authority in its efforts to establish the Heritage Trails
81 Development Program and to the Mississippi Delta Tourism
82 Association.

83 **SECTION 6.** There is created in the State Treasury a special
84 fund to be designated the "Cultural Heritage Development Fund."
85 The fund shall consist of monies designated for deposit therein
86 from any source, public or private, including, but not limited to,
87 appropriations, grants, gifts or donations. Monies in the fund
88 may be used as matching funds to procure federal grants that may
89 be used in support of the development and expansion of cultural
90 arts and heritage tourism. The Division of Tourism of the
91 Mississippi Development Authority shall be responsible for the
92 administration of the fund.

93 **SECTION 7.** Section 57-1-59, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
94 amended as follows:

95 57-1-59. The Mississippi Development Authority shall have
96 the following general powers and duties with respect to tourism:

97 (a) To promote and advertise the image of Mississippi
98 both within and without the boundaries of this state;

99 (b) To promote and advertise fairs and similar
100 activities of interest to tourists and the traveling public;

101 (c) To promote and advertise the use of wildlife and
102 natural areas by tourists and the traveling public;

103 (d) To promote and advertise the use of state
104 recreational and park facilities by tourists and the traveling
105 public;

106 (e) To promote and advertise all resources of the State
107 of Mississippi as attractions to tourists and the traveling
108 public;

109 (f) To develop for all agencies of state government the
110 necessary promotional and advertising materials needed to promote
111 all facilities and programs which may be of interest to travelers
112 and tourists;

113 (g) To maintain an educational awareness program for
114 the citizens of the state to constantly encourage increased
115 development of activities of interest to tourists and the
116 traveling public;

117 (h) To develop and maintain an information services
118 system to adequately guide tourists and the traveling public
119 within the boundaries of the state;

120 (i) To develop and maintain an extensive media program
121 to adequately inform the national and international consumer about
122 Mississippi; * * *

123 (j) To enter into contracts and other agreements with
124 local tourism commissions or similar entities for the purpose of
125 developing regional strategies for tourism promotion. The
126 Mississippi Development Authority, in conjunction with the
127 formulation of regional strategies for tourism promotion, may
128 require that local tourism commissions or similar entities enter
129 into agreements with the authority as a condition for receiving
130 any state grants to promote tourism;

131 (k) To develop mechanisms to enhance existing cultural
132 heritage tourism attractions and attractors and to support
133 programs that create employment opportunities in the cultural arts
134 and related tourism industry. The Mississippi Development
135 Authority shall pursue existing federal programs and grants that

136 will enhance workforce training and create job opportunities as
137 well as enhance cultural heritage tourism in the Mississippi Delta
138 region; and

139 (1) To encourage and support the creation of cultural
140 heritage business incubators in communities in the Delta region
141 and aid in creation of a "made in the Mississippi Delta" branding
142 initiative.

143 **SECTION 8.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
144 and after July 1, 2007.