

By: Senator(s) Jordan, Jackson (11th),  
Thomas, Clarke, Walls, Simmons, Harden,  
Williamson, Dawkins

To: Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2751

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.