MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE REGULAR SESSION 2013

By: Representatives Blackmon, Rushing To: Municipalities

HOUSE BILL NO. 1519
(As Passed the House)

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 97-25-3, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO PROVIDE THAT THE GOVERNING AUTHORITIES OF A MUNICIPALITY ARE AUTHORIZED TO PROSECUTE WITHIN THE MUNICIPALITY WHEN TAMPERING OF ELECTRIC, GAS OR WATER METERS OCCURS AND SUCH METERS ARE LOCATED OUTSIDE THE MUNICIPAL BOUNDARIES OF THE MUNICIPALITY; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. Section 97-25-3, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

97-25-3. Whoever, intentionally, by any means or device, prevents electric current, water or gas from passing through any meter or meters belonging to any person, firm or corporation engaged in the manufacture, sale or distribution of electricity, water or gas for lighting, power or other purposes, furnished such persons to register current or electricity, water or gas, passing through meters, or intentionally prevents the meter from duly registering the quantity of electricity, water or gas supplied, or in any manner interferes with its proper action or just registration, or, without the consent of such person, firm or corporation, intentionally diverts any electrical current from any

wire or cable, or water or gas from any pipe or main of such person, firm or corporation, or otherwise intentionally uses, or causes to be used, without the consent of such person, firm or corporation, any electricity or gas manufactured, or water produced or distributed, by such person, firm or corporation, or any person, firm or corporation who retains possession of, or refuses to deliver any meter or meters, lamp or lamps, or other appliances which may be, or may have been, loaned them by any person, firm or corporation for the purpose of furnishing electricity, water or gas, through the same, with the intent to defraud such person, firm or corporation, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, shall be punished by a fine of not less than One Hundred Dollars ($100.00) and not more than Five Hundred Dollars ($500.00), or by imprisonment in the county jail not more than three (3) months, or by both fine and imprisonment in the discretion of the court.

The presence at any time on or about such meter or meters, wire, cable, pipe or main of any device or unauthorized meter or pipe or wire resulting in the diversion of electric current, water or gas, as above defined, or resulting in the prevention of the proper action or just registration of the meter or meters as above set forth, the same being knowingly or intentionally installed, shall constitute prima facie evidence of knowledge on the part of the person, firm or corporation having custody or control of the room or place where such device or pipe or wire is located, or the

existence thereof and the effect thereof, and shall constitute prima facie evidence of the intention on the part of such person, firm or corporation to defraud and shall bring such person, firm or corporation prima facie within the scope, meaning and penalties of this section.

Provided further, that if any person, firm or corporation engaged in the selling or delivering of any electric current, water or gas, to a consumer shall knowingly cause to be installed any meter or meters intentionally adjusted or regulated so as to cause such meter or meters to register a greater amount of such electric current, water or gas, than actually passes through the same, shall be prima facie evidence of the knowledge of such person, firm or corporation engaged in selling or delivering such electric current, water or gas, of the existence thereof and shall bring such person, firm or corporation within the scope and meaning of this section, and subject to the operation of this section. Provided further, any employee, stockholder, or member of the board of directors who, with intent to defraud a customer, falsifies, or acquiesces in the falsifying, of any record which results in billing in excess of the amount lawfully due and owing, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be fined not more than Five Hundred Dollars ($500.00) or sentenced to serve not more than six (6) months in jail, or both.

Provided further, this section shall not relieve any person, firm or corporation from any other liabilities now imposed by law.

The governing authorities of any municipality are authorized to prosecute any violation of this section which is committed upon meters owned or operated by a utility which is owned or operated by a municipality. In addition, the governing authorities of a municipality are authorized to prosecute within the municipality when any violation of this section is committed upon such meters that lie outside the municipal boundaries of the municipality.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2013.

ST: Tampering of municipal utility meters; authorize prosecution in municipality when tampering occurs outside municipal boundaries.