

By: Senator(s) Stone, Hale

To: Universities and  
Colleges; Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2317

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTIONS 37-106-29 AND 37-106-31, MISSISSIPPI  
2 CODE OF 1972, TO INCREASE THE TUITION AMOUNTS AVAILABLE UNDER THE  
3 MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT TUITION ASSISTANCE GRANT (M.T.A.G.) PROGRAM  
4 AND THE MISSISSIPPI EMINENT SCHOLARS GRANT PROGRAM; TO PROVIDE  
5 THAT QUALIFIED STUDENTS WHO HAVE GRADUATED FROM A MISSISSIPPI  
6 COMMUNITY/JUNIOR COLLEGE SHALL BE ELIGIBLE FOR A GRANT EQUAL TO  
7 100% OF THE COST OF TUITION AND FEES FOR THE STUDENT'S JUNIOR YEAR  
8 AT A MISSISSIPPI UNIVERSITY OR PRIVATE COLLEGE; TO CLARIFY THAT  
9 STUDENTS COMPLETING ACCREDITED HOMESCHOOL PROGRAMS SHALL BE  
10 ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR A MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT TUITION ASSISTANCE  
11 GRANT OR A MISSISSIPPI EMINENT SCHOLARS GRANT; AND FOR RELATED  
12 PURPOSES.

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

14 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-106-29, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
15 amended as follows:

16 37-106-29. (1) There is established the Mississippi  
17 Resident Tuition Assistance Grant Program for college or  
18 university freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors to be  
19 administered by the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial  
20 Assistance Board established under Section 37-106-9, Mississippi  
21 Code of 1972, which shall set the dates and deadlines for applying  
22 for an award under this section. The board shall establish such



23 rules and regulations as it deems necessary and proper to carry  
24 out the purposes and intent of this section.

25 (2) The college or university shall approve grants to  
26 full-time freshmen, sophomore, junior and senior Mississippi  
27 residents who meet the general requirements for student  
28 eligibility as provided in subsection (4) of this section.

29 (3) Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grants shall be  
30 for Mississippi students from any Mississippi family whose prior  
31 year adjusted gross income (AGI) exceeds the maximum allowed to  
32 qualify for full Pell Grant eligibility and campus-based federal  
33 aid. Those Mississippi students receiving less than the full Pell  
34 Grant award, as determined by the institution, shall receive a  
35 Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant in an amount not to  
36 exceed the maximum Pell Grant allowable for that individual  
37 student. The award shall be applied to tuition, rooms and meals,  
38 books, materials and fees not to exceed \* \* \* Two Thousand Dollars  
39 (\$2,000.00) for junior and senior students attending state  
40 institutions of higher learning in Mississippi or four-year  
41 regionally accredited, state-approved, nonprofit colleges and  
42 universities in Mississippi, and \* \* \* One Thousand Dollars  
43 (\$1,000.00) for freshmen and sophomores attending state  
44 institutions of higher learning or public community or junior  
45 colleges in Mississippi, or regionally accredited, state-approved,  
46 nonprofit two-year or four-year colleges in Mississippi, which  
47 will be prorated per term, semester or quarter of the academic



48 year for costs of attendance, calculated according to the formula  
49 specified in subsection (8) of this section. Provided, however,  
50 that any eligible student who has graduated from a public  
51 community or junior college in Mississippi shall qualify for a  
52 Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant equal to one hundred  
53 percent (100%) of the cost of tuition, rooms, meals, books,  
54 materials and fees at any Mississippi institution of higher  
55 learning listed below in subsection (4) (d) of this section, to  
56 only be used for two (2) semesters of the student's junior year  
57 attendance at such institution. No student may receive a grant in  
58 excess of the cost of tuition, rooms, meals, books, materials and  
59 fees at the applicable college or university.

60 (4) The general requirements for initial eligibility of  
61 students for Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grants  
62 consist of the following:

63 (a) Member of a Mississippi family whose prior year  
64 adjusted gross income (AGI) exceeds the maximum allowed to qualify  
65 for Pell Grant eligibility and campus-based federal aid.

66 (b) Acceptance for enrollment at any state institution  
67 of higher learning or public community or junior college located  
68 in Mississippi, or any regionally accredited, state-approved,  
69 nonprofit four- or two-year college or university located in  
70 Mississippi as listed in subsection (d) of this Section  
71 37-106-29(4), within one (1) year of graduation from high school  
72 or an accredited home education program with: (i) a minimum grade



73 point average of 2.5 calculated on a 4.0 scale after seven (7)  
74 semesters certified by the high school counselor or other  
75 authorized school official on the application and graduation from  
76 high school verified by the institution before disbursement of  
77 award and has scored fifteen (15) on the American College Test  
78 Program (ACT); or (ii) has attended \* \* \* an accredited home  
79 education program during grade levels 9 through 12, and has scored  
80 fifteen (15) on the American College Testing Program; or (iii)  
81 satisfactory completion of the General Educational Development  
82 Test (GED) or have successfully completed the International  
83 Baccalaureate Program and has scored fifteen (15) on the American  
84 College Testing Program; provided, however, that any student  
85 entering a vocational or technical program of study, or who has  
86 satisfactorily completed the General Education Development Test  
87 and attends a community or junior college will not be required to  
88 have a test score under the American College Testing Program  
89 except those students enrolled in courses of academic study. Any  
90 student currently enrolled in any qualified institution shall have  
91 to only meet the same requirements as students who are applying  
92 for a renewal award.

93 (c) Resident status for purposes of receiving grants  
94 under this section shall be determined in the same manner as  
95 resident status for tuition purposes as set forth in Sections  
96 37-103-1 through 37-103-29, with the exception of Section  
97 37-103-17.



98           (d) Must attend one (1) of the following institutions  
99 of higher learning within one (1) year of graduation from high  
100 school or an accredited homeschool program: Alcorn State  
101 University, Delta State University, Jackson State University,  
102 Mississippi State University, Mississippi University for Women,  
103 Mississippi Valley State University, University of Mississippi,  
104 University of Southern Mississippi, Coahoma Community College,  
105 Copiah-Lincoln Community College, East Central Community College,  
106 East Mississippi Community College, Hinds Community College,  
107 Holmes Community College, Itawamba Community College, Jones County  
108 Junior College, Meridian Community College, Mississippi Delta  
109 Community College, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College,  
110 Northeast Mississippi Community College, Northwest Mississippi  
111 Community College, Pearl River Community College, Southwest  
112 Mississippi Community College, Belhaven College, Blue Mountain  
113 College, Millsaps College, Mississippi College, Rust College,  
114 Tougaloo College, William Carey College, Mary Holmes College,  
115 Magnolia Bible College, Wood College and Wesley College.

116           (5) By accepting a Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance  
117 Grant, the student is attesting to the accuracy, completeness and  
118 correctness of information provided to demonstrate the student's  
119 eligibility. Falsification of such information shall result in  
120 the denial of any pending grant and revocation of any award  
121 currently held to the extent that no further payments shall be  
122 made. Any student knowingly making false statements in order to



123 receive a grant shall be guilty of a misdemeanor punishable, upon  
124 conviction thereof, by a fine of up to Ten Thousand Dollars  
125 (\$10,000.00), a prison sentence of up to one (1) year in the  
126 county jail, or both, and shall be required to return all  
127 Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grants wrongfully  
128 obtained.

129 (6) Eligibility for renewal of Mississippi Resident Tuition  
130 Assistance Grants shall be evaluated at the end of each semester,  
131 or term, of each academic year. As a condition for renewal, a  
132 student shall:

133 (a) Make steady academic progress toward a certificate  
134 or degree, as outlined in the school Satisfactory Academic  
135 Progress Standards and certified by the institution's registrar.

136 (b) Maintain continuous enrollment for not less than  
137 two (2) semesters or three (3) quarters in each successive  
138 academic year, unless granted an exception for cause by the  
139 administering agency; examples of cause may include student  
140 participation in a cooperative program, internship program or  
141 foreign study program. If a student fails to maintain continuous  
142 enrollment, and is not granted an exception for cause by the  
143 administering agency, the student is ineligible to receive the  
144 Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant during the following  
145 semester or trimester or term of the regular academic year.



146 (c) Have a cumulative grade point average of at  
147 least \* \* \* 2.0 calculated on a 4.0 scale at the end of each  
148 semester or trimester or term.

149 (7) Each student, each year, must complete a Free  
150 Application for Federal Student Aid form or a Statement of  
151 Certification as designed by the administering board to determine  
152 his/her eligibility for a Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance  
153 Grant.

154 (8) (a) The amount of the Mississippi Resident Tuition  
155 Assistance Grant awarded to any one (1) student, up to the maximum  
156 amount provided in subsection (3) of this section, shall be the  
157 difference of the student's cost of attendance at his accredited  
158 college of choice and the amount of federal aid such student may  
159 receive, not to supplant but to supplement the amount of any  
160 federal aid awarded to the student. Cost of attendance is the  
161 tuition and fees of the applicable institution plus an allowance  
162 for room and meals and books and materials.

163 (b) Payment of the Mississippi Resident Tuition  
164 Assistance Grant shall be made payable to the recipient and the  
165 educational institution and mailed directly to the institution, to  
166 be applied first to tuition.

167 (c) Any college or university that receives Mississippi  
168 Resident Tuition Assistance Grant funds shall include a statement  
169 on the student's tuition/fee bill that these scholarship funds are  
170 provided by the Mississippi Legislature.



171           (9) In order for an institution to remain eligible for its  
172 students to participate in the Mississippi Resident Tuition  
173 Assistance Grant Program, the institution shall comply with the  
174 following requirements:

175           (a) A complete and accurate roster of the eligibility  
176 status of each awarded student shall be made to the board for each  
177 term, semester or quarter of the academic year the student  
178 receives a Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant.

179           (b) The institution is required to make refunds to the  
180 Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant Fund for any funds  
181 which have not been disbursed to the recipient, in the case of  
182 students who have received a grant but who terminate enrollment  
183 during the academic term, semester or quarter of the academic year  
184 if an institution's refund policies permit a student to receive a  
185 refund in such instance. The recipient shall be responsible for  
186 the refund of any funds which have been disbursed by the  
187 institution in such instance.

188           (c) If a student drops below full-time status but does  
189 not terminate all enrollment during the term, semester or quarter  
190 of the academic year no refund will be required for that term.  
191 However, that student is ineligible to receive the Mississippi  
192 Resident Tuition Assistance Grant during the following term,  
193 semester or quarter of the regular academic year.

194           (d) The board may conduct its own annual audits of any  
195 institution participating in the Mississippi Resident Tuition





196 Assistance Grant Program. The board may suspend or revoke an  
197 institution's eligibility to receive future monies under the  
198 program if it finds that the institution has not complied with the  
199 provisions of this section. In determining a student's initial  
200 eligibility, the number of prior semesters enrolled will not be  
201 counted against the student.

202 (10) No student may receive a Mississippi Resident Tuition  
203 Assistance Grant for more than the equivalent semesters or  
204 quarters required to complete one (1) baccalaureate degree or one  
205 (1) certificate or associate degree program per institution.

206 (11) Subject to the availability of funds specifically  
207 appropriated therefor, it is the intent of the Legislature to  
208 fully fund grant awards to eligible students. If funds are  
209 insufficient to fully fund grant awards to eligible students,  
210 grant awards shall be prorated among all eligible students. No  
211 student shall receive any combination of student financial aid in  
212 excess of the cost of attendance as defined in subsection (8)(a).

213 (12) No student receiving a Mississippi Eminent Scholars  
214 Grant as provided in Section 37-106-31 shall be eligible to  
215 receive the Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant pursuant  
216 to Section 37-106-29 unless he is eligible for such award after  
217 the Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant has been considered by the  
218 board when conducting an assessment of the financial resources  
219 available to the student. In no case shall any student receive



220 any combination of student financial aid that would exceed the  
221 cost of attendance, as defined in subsection (8) (a).

222 For purposes of this section, certificated shall mean, but  
223 not be limited to, all postsecondary vocational programs in  
224 eligible institutions as identified in subsection (4) (d) of this  
225 section.

226 **SECTION 2.** Section 37-106-31, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
227 amended as follows:

228 37-106-31. (1) There is created a Mississippi Eminent  
229 Scholars Fund, to be administered by the Mississippi Postsecondary  
230 Education Financial Assistance Board established under Section  
231 37-106-9. The board shall set the date that will serve as the  
232 deadline for applying for an award under this section and award  
233 scholarships to each Mississippi student who:

234 (a) (i) Is recognized by the merit or achievement  
235 programs of the National Merit Scholarship Corporation or the  
236 National Achievement Scholarship as a semifinalist or finalist,  
237 and has obtained a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.5  
238 calculated on a 4.0 scale in high school subjects acceptable for  
239 credit toward a diploma, after seven (7) semesters certified by  
240 the high school counselor or other authorized school official on  
241 the application and graduation from high school verified by the  
242 institution before disbursement of award; or

243 (ii) Has scored twenty-nine (29) on the American  
244 College Testing Program or its equivalent and has obtained a



245 minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.5 calculated on a 4.0  
246 scale after seven (7) semesters certified by the high school  
247 counselor or other authorized school official on the application  
248 and graduation from high school verified by the institution before  
249 disbursement of award, or the equivalent in high school subjects  
250 acceptable for credit toward a diploma; or

251 (iii) Has attended \* \* \* an accredited home  
252 education program during grade levels 9 through 12 and has scored  
253 twenty-nine (29) on the American College Testing Program or its  
254 equivalent; and

255 (iv) Has been certified by the college or  
256 university to the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial  
257 Assistance Board as a Mississippi Eminent Scholar.

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

260 (c) Dependents of Mississippi residents who are on  
261 military or public service assignments away from Mississippi when  
262 such dependents live with such Mississippi residents and receive  
263 high school diplomas from non-Mississippi schools shall be  
264 exempted.

265 (d) Files, before the deadline, an application for an  
266 award during his last year in high school, or before the  
267 expiration of the third school year succeeding the year of his  
268 high school graduation.



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

274 (f) Enrolls for the first time as a college student in  
275 Mississippi. Any student who earns postsecondary academic credit  
276 prior to or during the summer immediately subsequent to receiving  
277 a high school diploma, who is dually enrolled in secondary and  
278 postsecondary educational institutions, or who is enrolled in the  
279 early admission program of a postsecondary institution shall be  
280 exempt from this requirement.

281 (g) Is a resident of the State of Mississippi.  
282 Residency status for purposes of receiving grants under this  
283 section shall be determined in the same manner as resident status  
284 for tuition purposes as set forth in Sections 37-103-1 through  
285 37-103-29, with the exception of Section 37-103-17.

286 (2) (a) Students who apply for awards but do not accept  
287 their initial awards may reapply to receive awards during  
288 subsequent application periods occurring before the expiration of  
289 the third school year succeeding the year of their high school  
290 graduation. Similarly, students who receive initial awards and  
291 who later do not accept renewal awards may reapply to receive  
292 awards during subsequent application periods occurring before the  
293 expiration of the third school year succeeding the year of their



294 high school graduation. The institution shall accept  
295 reinstatement applications according to dates set by the  
296 Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board and  
297 shall determine the eligibility of such applicants in the same  
298 manner as first-time applicants, except that students who apply  
299 pursuant to this paragraph shall be required to have maintained  
300 the equivalent of a 3.5 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0  
301 scale for all college work attempted. The board shall not make  
302 awards to reinstatement applicants who submit applications that  
303 are received after the deadline set by the Mississippi  
304 Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board.

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

308 (3) (a) The annual award to a student shall be up to \* \* \*  
309 Three Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$3,500.00) for tuition \* \* \*,  
310 fees \* \* \*, rooms, meals, books and materials. Provided, however,  
311 that any eligible recipient who graduates from a community or  
312 junior college in Mississippi shall qualify for a Mississippi  
313 Eminent Scholars Grant equal to one hundred percent (100%) of the  
314 cost of tuition, fees, rooms, meals, books and materials at a  
315 Mississippi institution of higher learning listed in Section  
316 37-106-29(4) (d), to only be used for two (2) semesters of the  
317 recipient's junior year attendance at such institution. No  
318 recipient may receive a grant in excess of the cost of tuition,



319 rooms, meals, books, materials and fees at the applicable college  
320 or university. Payment of the Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant  
321 shall be made payable to the recipient and the educational  
322 institution and mailed directly to the institution, to be applied  
323 first to tuition. Any college or university that receives Eminent  
324 Scholars Grant funds shall include a statement on the student's  
325 tuition/fee bill stating that these scholarship funds are provided  
326 by the Mississippi Legislature.

327 (b) Within six (6) weeks of the end of regular  
328 registration, inclusive of a drop-add period, institutions shall  
329 certify to the board the eligibility status of each awarded  
330 student. The eligibility status of each student to receive a  
331 disbursement shall be determined by each institution as of this  
332 date. Institutions shall not be required to reevaluate a  
333 student's eligibility status after this date for purposes of  
334 amending eligibility determinations previously made. However, an  
335 institution shall be requested to make refunds for students who  
336 receive award disbursements and terminate enrollment for any  
337 reason during the academic term when an institution's refund  
338 policies permit a student to receive a refund under the  
339 circumstances.

340 (c) Institutions shall certify to the board the amount  
341 of funds disbursed to each student and shall remit to the board  
342 any undisbursed advances within sixty (60) days of the end of  
343 regular registration.



344 (4) A recipient shall maintain the equivalent of a 3.5  
345 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale, or shall maintain  
346 an approved equivalent student progress evaluation plan, on at  
347 least twelve (12) hours per quarter, trimester or semester in  
348 order to be eligible for a continuation of the award. No student  
349 may receive a Mississippi Eminent Scholars Fund award for more  
350 than the equivalent semesters or quarters required to complete one  
351 (1) degree or certificate program per institution. The award may  
352 be renewed annually upon certification of eligibility by the  
353 eligible institutions that the recipient meets the necessary  
354 qualifications. If any recipient transfers from one university,  
355 community college or junior college to another, his award will be  
356 transferable, provided he is otherwise eligible for the award. If  
357 a student fails to maintain continuous enrollment, and is not  
358 granted an exception for cause by the administering agency, the  
359 student is ineligible to receive the Mississippi Eminent Scholars  
360 Grant during the following semester or trimester or term of the  
361 regular academic year.

362 (5) The board may conduct its own annual audits of any  
363 institution participating in the Mississippi Eminent Scholars  
364 Grant Program. The board may suspend or revoke an institution's  
365 eligibility to receive future monies under the program if it finds  
366 that the institution has not complied with the provisions of this  
367 section.



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

372           **SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
373 and after July 1, 2013.

