

By: Representative Mims

To: Public Health and Human Services

HOUSE BILL NO. 154

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 43-6-153, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,  
 2 TO DEFINE ADDITIONAL TERMS IN THE MISSISSIPPI SUPPORT ANIMAL ACT;  
 3 TO AMEND SECTION 43-6-155, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO INCLUDE  
 4 POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD) IN THE QUALIFYING LIST OF  
 5 DISABILITIES AND IMPAIRMENTS FOR WHICH AN INDIVIDUAL MAY BE  
 6 PROVIDED THE USE OF A SUPPORT ANIMAL; TO REQUIRE ORGANIZATIONS OR  
 7 PERSONS OPERATING PROFESSIONAL DOG TRAINING FACILITIES AND  
 8 PROGRAMS TO REGISTER WITH THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE; TO  
 9 PRESCRIBE THE MINIMUM TRAINING REQUIREMENTS OF SUPPORT ANIMALS; TO  
 10 REQUIRE THE SUPPORT ANIMAL TRAINER TO PROVIDE EACH ANIMAL  
 11 OWNER/HANDLER WITH AN APPLICATION TO BE COMPLETED BEFORE THE  
 12 ADMINISTRATION OF THE SUPPORT PUBLIC ACCESS TEST TO CERTIFY A DOG  
 13 AS A SUPPORT ANIMAL; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

15 **SECTION 1.** Section 43-6-153, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
 16 amended as follows:

17 43-6-153. The following words and phrases shall have the  
 18 meanings ascribed herein unless the context clearly indicates  
 19 otherwise:

20 (a) "Mobility impaired person" means any person,  
 21 regardless of age, who is subject to a physiological defect or  
 22 deficiency regardless of its cause, nature, or extent that renders  
 23 the person unable to move about without the aid of crutches, a



24 wheelchair or any other form of support, or that limits the  
25 person's functional ability to ambulate, climb, descend, sit,  
26 rise, or to perform any related function.

27 (b) "Blind" means either of the following:

28 (i) Vision 20/200 or less in the better eye with  
29 proper correction.

30 (ii) Field defect in the better eye with proper  
31 correction which contracts the peripheral field so that the  
32 diameter of the visual field subtends an angle no greater than  
33 twenty (20) degrees.

34 (c) "Post traumatic stress disorder" (PTSD) means  
35 an anxiety disorder that occurs following the experience of a  
36 very stressful, frightening or distressing event, or from  
37 witnessing a traumatic event. For purposes of this chapter, a  
38 traumatic event is a life-threatening event such as military  
39 combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents  
40 or violent personal assaults of the physical or sexual nature  
41 which occurred while an individual was on active duty or  
42 deployment as a member of the United States armed services.

43 (d) (i) "Support animal" means a guide dog, signal dog  
44 or other animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks  
45 for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a  
46 physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual or other mental  
47 disability. The work done or task performed must be directly



48 related to the individual's disability and may include, but not be  
49 limited to:

50 1. Guiding individuals who are visually  
51 impaired or blind;

52 2. Alerting individuals who are hearing  
53 impaired or deaf to an intruder or sounds;

54 3. Providing minimal protection or rescue  
55 work;

56 4. Pulling a wheelchair;

57 5. Fetching dropped items;

58 6. Detecting the onset of a seizure, and  
59 alerting and protecting individuals having a seizure;

60 7. Retrieving objects;

61 8. Alerting an individual to the presence of  
62 allergens;

63 9. Providing physical support and assistance  
64 with balance and stability to an individual with a mobility  
65 disability;

66 10. Helping an individual with a psychiatric  
67 or neurological disability by preventing or interrupting impulsive  
68 or destructive behaviors;

69 11. Reminding an individual with mental  
70 illness to take prescribed medications;

71 12. Calming an individual with post traumatic  
72 stress disorder during an anxiety attack; or



73                   13. Doing other specific work or performing  
74 other special tasks.

75                   (ii) The term "support animal" does not mean an  
76 animal considered a pet, and is limited to a dog or miniature  
77 horse.

78                   (e) "Support animal trainer" means a person who is  
79 registered with the Office of the Secretary of State to train or  
80 raise service animals for individuals with disabilities, whether  
81 the person is a professional or serving as a volunteer with a  
82 professional trainer.

83                   **SECTION 2.** Section 43-6-155, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
84 amended as follows:

85                   43-6-155. (1) Any blind person, mobility impaired person,  
86 veteran of the United States armed services diagnosed with post  
87 traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or hearing impaired person who  
88 uses a dog or other animal specifically trained as a guide,  
89 leader, listener or for any other assistance necessary to assist  
90 such blind, mobility impaired, veteran diagnosed with PTSD or  
91 hearing impaired person in day-to-day activities shall be entitled  
92 to the full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities and  
93 privileges of all public conveyances, hotels, lodging places,  
94 businesses open to the public for the sale of any goods or  
95 services and all places of public accommodation, amusement, or  
96 resort and other places to which the general public is invited,  
97 and may take the dog or other animal into conveyances and places,



98 subject only to the conditions and limitations applicable to all  
99 persons not so accompanied, except that:

100 (a) The dog or other animal shall not occupy a seat in  
101 any public conveyance.

102 (b) The dog or other animal shall be upon a leash or  
103 otherwise sufficiently restrained in a manner appropriate for the  
104 animal while using the facilities of a common carrier.

105 (2) Support animal \* \* \* trainers of support dogs and other  
106 support animals shall have the same rights of accommodations,  
107 advantages, facilities and privileges with support  
108 animals-in-training as those provided to blind, mobility impaired,  
109 PTSD diagnosed or hearing impaired persons with support animals  
110 under this section.

111 (3) No person shall deprive a blind, mobility impaired, PTSD  
112 diagnosed, hearing impaired person, or a support animal trainer of  
113 any of the advantages, facilities or privileges provided in this  
114 section, nor charge such blind, mobility impaired or hearing  
115 impaired person or support animal trainer a fee or charge for the  
116 use of the animal.

117 **SECTION 3.** (1) From and after July 1, 2016, any  
118 organization or person operating a professional dog training  
119 facility and program, whether the facility's purpose is to provide  
120 training of support animals, obedience training or for law  
121 enforcement functions, shall register with the Office of the  
122 Secretary of State.



123           (2) At a minimum, each professional dog training facility or  
124 program that provides training of support animals, shall:

125           (a) Adhere to Section 35 of the Guide, Hearing and  
126 Assistance Dogs Act of 2009 and administer Public Access Test  
127 (P.A.T.) to each qualifying dog enrolled in its support animal  
128 training program, to assess if a support animal is proficient in  
129 the fourteen (14) (P.A.T.) elements of hand and verbal signals,  
130 including:

- 131                   (i) Controlled unload out of vehicle;
- 132                   (ii) Approaching the building;
- 133                   (iii) Controlled entry through a door-way;
- 134                   (iv) Heeling through the building;
- 135                   (v) Six-foot recall on lead;
- 136                   (vi) Sits on command;
- 137                   (vii) Downs on command;
- 138                   (viii) Noise distraction;
- 139                   (ix) Restaurant;
- 140                   (x) Off lead;
- 141                   (xi) Dog taken by another person without  
142 displaying signs of aggressive, excessive stress or whining;
- 143                   (xii) Controlled exit;
- 144                   (xiii) Controlled load into vehicle; and
- 145                   (xiv) Team relationship to demonstrate that the  
146 dog and handler perform at the required standard;



147 (b) Adhere to the four (4) tiers of standards obedience  
148 programs and commands recognized in the training of dogs for use  
149 in K-9 law enforcement services; and

150 (c) Adhere to the standard established by Assistance  
151 Dogs International and the United States Service Dog Registry  
152 requiring the training for each qualifying dog enrolled in its  
153 support animal training program to consist of:

154 (i) Not less than one hundred twenty (120) nor  
155 more than three hundred sixty (360) hours of training, at a rate  
156 of one (1) to two (2) hours daily over the course of six (6)  
157 months to a year; and

158 (ii) A minimum of thirty (30) hours of training  
159 spent in a controlled public setting to enable the dog to learn  
160 how to behave obediently and unobtrusively in public.

161 (3) Each support animal trainer shall provide each animal  
162 owner/handler with an application to be completed before the  
163 administration of the support P.A.T., which shall be in a format  
164 designed by the Secretary of State which identifies the  
165 owner/handler's disability through a certified physician's  
166 statement, an attested statement from the veterinary professional  
167 responsible for the support animals veterinary care, and a general  
168 release of liability and acceptance of responsibility.

169 **SECTION 4.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
170 and after July 1, 2016.

