

By: Representative Hood

To: Conservation and Water Resources

HOUSE BILL NO. 1334

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTIONS 49-17-405, 49-17-407 AND 49-17-421,  
2 MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO PROVIDE THAT WHEN UNDERGROUND STORAGE  
3 TANK FEES ARE INSUFFICIENT TO COVER ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS, THE  
4 COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH ADMINISTRATION OF THE MISSISSIPPI  
5 GROUNDWATER PROTECTION TRUST FUND AND RELATED PURPOSES SHALL BE  
6 PAID FROM THE FUND; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

8 **SECTION 1.** Section 49-17-405, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
9 amended as follows:

10 49-17-405. (1) There is hereby created the Mississippi  
11 Groundwater Protection Trust Fund, hereinafter referred to as the  
12 "fund" to be administered by the Executive Director of the  
13 Department of \* \* \* Environmental Quality. The commission shall  
14 adopt regulations for administering this fund.

15 (2) The commission shall expend or utilize monies up to One  
16 Million Dollars (\$1,000,000.00) annually in the fund by an annual  
17 appropriation approved by the Legislature to supplement all  
18 reasonable direct and indirect costs associated with the  
19 development and administration of the Underground Storage Tank  
20 (UST) Program if the annual tank regulatory fee in Section



21 49-17-421 does not adequately cover the costs associated with  
22 Sections 49-17-401 through 49-17-435. All reasonable direct and  
23 indirect costs associated with development and administration of  
24 the UST Program, including, but not limited to, the reasonable  
25 costs of the following activities as they relate to the UST  
26 Program:

27 (a) Preparing generally applicable regulations or  
28 guidance regarding the UST Program or its implementation or  
29 enforcement;

30 (b) Administering the UST Program, including the  
31 supporting and tracking of UST owners/operators and associated UST  
32 systems, compliance with UST regulations, the fund, UST-certified  
33 contractors, tank fees and related data entry;

34 (c) Implementing and enforcing the terms of the UST  
35 regulations; and

36 (d) Investigation, assessment and rehabilitation of  
37 contamination sites with restoration or replacement of potable  
38 water supplies.

39 At no time shall an annual fund appropriation result in more  
40 than supplemental funding for the current annual cost of  
41 administering the UST Program.

42 (3) Whenever in the executive director's determination a  
43 release of motor fuels at an active site may pose a threat to the  
44 environment or the public health, safety or welfare, the



45 department shall obligate monies available in the fund to provide  
46 for:

47 (a) Investigation and assessment of contamination  
48 sites;

49 (b) Restoration or replacement of potable water  
50 supplies;

51 (c) Rehabilitation of contamination sites, which may  
52 consist of cleanup of affected soil, groundwater and inland  
53 surface waters, using cost-effective alternatives that are  
54 technologically feasible and reliable, and that provide adequate  
55 protection of the public health, safety and welfare and minimize  
56 environmental damage, in accordance with the site selection and  
57 clean-up criteria established by the commission, except that  
58 nothing herein shall be construed to authorize the commission to  
59 obligate funds for payment of costs which may be associated with,  
60 but are not integral to, site rehabilitation, such as the cost for  
61 retrofitting or replacing underground storage tanks.

62 ( \* \* \*4) Whenever the commission has expended funds from  
63 the fund created by Sections 49-17-401 through 49-17-433, the  
64 owner of the underground storage tank shall not be liable to the  
65 department for such costs if the owner was in substantial  
66 compliance on the date on which the discharge of the motor fuels  
67 which necessitates the cleanup was reported to the department.  
68 Otherwise owners are responsible for reimbursement and the  
69 reimbursed monies shall go back into the fund. In such



70 circumstances the commission is authorized to take any necessary  
71 action to recover these monies from responsible owners.

72 ( \* \* \*5) Any provisions of this section and chapter  
73 regarding liability for the costs of cleanup, removal, remediation  
74 or abatement of any pollution, hazardous waste or solid waste  
75 shall be limited as provided in Section 49-17-42 and rules adopted  
76 thereto.

77 **SECTION 2.** Section 49-17-407, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
78 amended as follows:

79 49-17-407. (1) (a) An environmental protection fee of  
80 Four-tenths of One Cent (4/10 of 1¢) per gallon is hereby levied  
81 upon any bonded distributor, as defined by Sections 49-17-401  
82 through 49-17-433, who sells or delivers motor fuels to a retailer  
83 or user in this state.

84 (b) Every person, other than a bonded distributor, who  
85 shall purchase or acquire motor fuels within this state on which  
86 the environmental protection fee has not accrued, shall be liable  
87 for the environmental protection fee.

88 (c) The environmental protection fee shall be imposed  
89 only one (1) time on motor fuels sold in the state.

90 (d) The environmental protection fee shall be collected  
91 by the Department of Revenue and shall be designated separately  
92 from the excise taxes on fuels.

93 (e) Any person liable for the environmental protection  
94 fee shall be subject to the same requirements and penalties as



95 distributors under the provisions of the Mississippi Special Fuel  
96 Tax Law.

97 (f) Any person liable for the environmental protection  
98 fee shall file a report and remit any fees due at the same time  
99 provided for filing reports under Section 27-55-523, on forms  
100 prescribed by the Department of Revenue.

101 (g) The Department of Revenue is hereby authorized and  
102 empowered to promulgate all rules and regulations necessary for  
103 the administration of the environmental protection fee.

104 (2) (a) On or before the fifteenth day of each month the  
105 environmental protection fees collected during the previous month  
106 shall be deposited into the Mississippi Groundwater Protection  
107 Trust Fund established in Section 49-17-405. When the unobligated  
108 balance in the fund reaches or exceeds Ten Million Dollars  
109 (\$10,000,000.00), the administrator of the fund shall notify in  
110 writing the Department of Revenue no later than the twenty-fifth  
111 day of the month to revise the distribution of the environmental  
112 protection fee and the Department of Revenue shall deposit the fee  
113 into the State Highway Fund. Such distribution shall become  
114 effective on the last day of the month succeeding the month in  
115 which such notice was given. All environmental protection fees  
116 accrued shall be reported and paid.

117 (b) When the fund balance is reduced below Six Million  
118 Dollars (\$6,000,000.00), the fee shall again be deposited into the  
119 Mississippi Groundwater Protection Trust Fund until such time as



120 the fund shall reach or exceed Ten Million Dollars  
121 (\$10,000,000.00). The administrator of the fund shall notify, no  
122 later than the twenty-fifth day of the month, the Department of  
123 Revenue to deposit the environmental protection fee into the  
124 Mississippi Groundwater Protection Trust Fund and such  
125 distribution shall become effective on the first day of the second  
126 month succeeding the month in which the notice to deposit the fee  
127 into the fund was given.

128 (3) This fund shall be used for the purposes set forth in  
129 Sections 49-17-401 through 49-17-435 and for no other governmental  
130 purposes, nor shall any portion hereof ever be available to borrow  
131 from by any branch of government; it being the intent of the  
132 Legislature that this fund and its increments shall remain intact  
133 and inviolate. Any interest earned on monies in this fund shall  
134 remain in this fund.

135 (4) Monies held in the fund established under Sections  
136 49-17-401 through 49-17-435 shall be used for supplemental funding  
137 of the Underground Storage Tank (UST) Program as described in  
138 Section 49-17-405 and only at an active site and shall be  
139 disbursed in accordance with the commission requirements and as  
140 follows:

141 (a) Payments shall be made to any third party who  
142 brings a third-party claim against any owner of an underground  
143 storage tank and the commission as trustee of the Mississippi  
144 Groundwater Protection Trust Fund and who obtains a final judgment



145 in such action which is valid and enforceable in this state  
146 against such parties. Payment shall be paid to the third party  
147 upon filing by such party an application with the department  
148 attaching the original or a certified copy of the final judgment.

149 (b) Payments shall be made in reasonable amounts to  
150 approved response action contractors and other parties involved in  
151 the site study and cleanup. Payment shall be made to the party  
152 incurring the costs by filing of a sworn application with the  
153 department indicating the fair and reasonable value of the costs  
154 of site rehabilitation, subject to the regulations and limitations  
155 as set by the department.

156 (5) Payments from the fund are limited as follows:

157 (a) For cleanup purposes, a maximum of One Million Five  
158 Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$1,500,000.00) may be disbursed from the  
159 fund for any one (1) site, per confirmed release occurrence.

160 (b) For third-party judgments, a maximum of One Million  
161 Dollars (\$1,000,000.00) may be disbursed from the fund for any one  
162 (1) site, per confirmed release occurrence.

163 (c) Nothing in Sections 49-17-401 through 49-17-435  
164 shall establish or create any liability or responsibility on the  
165 part of the department or the State of Mississippi to pay any  
166 cleanup costs or third-party claims if the fund created herein is  
167 insufficient to do so.



168 (6) Monies held in the fund established under Sections  
169 49-17-401 through 49-17-435 shall not be used for purchases of  
170 equipment needed to assist in cleanup operations.

171 (7) Nothing in Sections 49-17-401 through 49-17-435 shall  
172 serve to limit any recovery against an owner of an underground  
173 storage tank in excess of the fund payment limits established  
174 under this section.

175 (8) Substantial compliance shall in no way be construed to  
176 be an absolute defense to civil liability.

177 **SECTION 3.** Section 49-17-421, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
178 amended as follows:

179 49-17-421. (1) After receiving the annual report and  
180 recommendation of the Underground Storage Tank (UST) Advisory  
181 Council, the commission may assess and collect an annual tank  
182 regulatory fee in an amount sufficient to administer Sections  
183 49-17-401 through 49-17-435, but not to exceed Two Hundred Dollars  
184 (\$200.00) per tank. The fee, as set by the commission, shall be  
185 assessed per tank per year and shall be collected from the owner  
186 of each underground storage tank available for use in Mississippi  
187 on July 1, 1988, or brought into use or available for use after  
188 that date, as provided in the Mississippi Underground Storage Tank  
189 Act of 1988 (Sections 49-17-401 through 49-17-435). The fee  
190 assessed under this section is a debt due by the owner of each  
191 tank in use in Mississippi on July 1, 1988, or brought into use  
192 after that date.





193           (2) The commission shall establish the amount of the tank  
194 regulatory fee to cover the costs of the Underground Storage Tank  
195 Program. The fee for each state fiscal year shall be set by order  
196 of the commission, which shall include:

197           (a) A receipt of the report and recommendations of the  
198 UST Advisory Council, and

199           (b) A public notice to allow the public a period of at  
200 least thirty (30) days to provide comments regarding the  
201 underground storage tank fee report and recommendation, or to  
202 request a public hearing in accordance with Section  
203 49-17-29(4) (a) .

204           The department may conduct a public hearing on the tank  
205 regulatory fee when a significant level of public interest exists  
206 or when warranted by other factors. Notwithstanding the  
207 provisions of this subsection (2), the commission may proceed with  
208 entry of the order if the UST Advisory Council fails to submit its  
209 report in a timely manner.

210           The tank regulatory fee shall be due July 1 of each year, and  
211 if any part of the fee is not paid within thirty (30) days after  
212 the due date, a penalty of fifty percent (50%) of the amount due  
213 shall accrue at once and be added to the fee, unless the owner of  
214 the underground storage tank demonstrates to the commission that  
215 the failure to make timely payment was unavoidable due to  
216 financial hardship or otherwise beyond the control of the owner.



217 Monies collected under this section shall be deposited in a  
218 special fund which is created in the State Treasury. Unexpended  
219 amounts remaining in the special fund at the end of the fiscal  
220 year shall not lapse into the General Fund and any interest earned  
221 on amounts in the special fund shall be credited to the special  
222 fund by the Treasurer. The fund may receive monies from any  
223 available public or private source, including, but not limited to,  
224 the fund, collection of fees, interest, grants, taxes, public or  
225 private donations and judicial actions. Monies in this special  
226 fund shall be expended by annual appropriation approved by the  
227 Legislature to administer Sections 49-17-401 through 49-17-435.

228 **SECTION 4.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
229 and after its passage.

