

By: Representatives Carpenter, Arnold, Byrd, Hopkins, Williamson, Tullos, Stamps, Karriem To: Military Affairs

HOUSE BILL NO. 677
(As Sent to Governor)

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 35-3-21, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, AS
2 AMENDED BY SENATE BILL NO. 2197, 2023 REGULAR SESSION, TO REVISE
3 CERTAIN QUALIFICATIONS FOR COUNTY VETERAN SERVICE OFFICES; AND FOR
4 RELATED PURPOSES.

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

6 **SECTION 1.** Section 35-3-21, Mississippi Code of 1972, as
7 amended by Senate Bill No. 2197, 2023 Regular Session, is amended
8 as follows:

9 35-3-21. In order to maintain offices and pay personnel for
10 the purpose of assisting all residents of the State of Mississippi
11 who served in the military or naval forces of the United States
12 during any war, their relatives, beneficiaries or dependents, to
13 receive from the United States any and all compensation,
14 hospitalization, insurance or other aid or benefits to which they
15 may be entitled under existing or hereafter enacted laws of the
16 United States, the boards of supervisors in the various counties
17 in the state are hereby authorized and empowered, in their
18 discretion, to expend out of the general county fund, or special
19 veterans' fund herein authorized to be set up, or from both of



20 such funds, such monies necessary to defray the office operating
21 expenses and salary of the county veteran service officers.

22 Two (2) or more counties may, upon resolution duly adopted by
23 the board of supervisors of each of such counties, agree to
24 establish one (1) veteran service office for all of such counties.
25 When two (2) or more counties enter into such an agreement, each
26 county shall pay such amount mutually agreed upon and duly adopted
27 by resolution of the respective boards of supervisors.

28 County veteran service officers shall be (a) honorably
29 discharged or honorably released veterans; (b) the surviving
30 spouse or child of any such * * * veteran, living or deceased; or
31 (c) any person employed as a county veteran service officer in any
32 county of this state on March 30, 1990. From and after July 1,
33 1990, county veteran service officers shall be certified by the
34 Mississippi State Veterans Affairs Board which, among any other
35 criteria it may establish, shall require such officers to (a)
36 attend one (1) of the annual training programs provided for such
37 officers by the Mississippi State Veterans Affairs Board, (b)
38 successfully complete a written examination each year on the
39 duties and responsibilities of and assistance available to such
40 officers and veterans, (c) have certification and be accredited
41 according to 38 CFR Section 14.629 administered by the Mississippi
42 State Veterans Affairs Board, and (d) follow the rules and
43 regulations promulgated by the Mississippi State Veterans Affairs
44 Board. County veteran service officers who annually receive and



45 complete such instruction in a manner satisfactory to the Veterans
46 Affairs Board and in accordance with this section shall be
47 certified by the board. No county veteran service officer shall
48 be entitled to receive any compensation for his services, to which
49 he is otherwise entitled by law, unless he is annually certified
50 by the board. Persons who cannot meet the accreditation standards
51 of hours worked for county veteran service officers may be
52 certified by the Mississippi State Veterans Affairs Board as
53 Veterans Resource Advisors and be entitled to receive any
54 compensation for his services as authorized by law.

55 County veteran service officers may be employed, in the
56 discretion of the boards of supervisors, either full time or part
57 time.

58 County veteran service officers shall be authorized and
59 empowered to act for a veteran under a written power of attorney
60 authorized by the veteran for the purpose of assisting with
61 claims, benefits, and appeals in an administrative hearing before
62 the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and any of its
63 boards or departments, and shall be immune from legal action only
64 for such actions except in cases of abuse, fraud or breach of
65 fiduciary duty.

66 The boards of supervisors of the various counties are
67 authorized and directed to provide necessary office space and
68 communications connectivity for county veteran service officers.



69 The boards of supervisors of the various counties are further
70 authorized and empowered to pay all necessary and actual expenses
71 of county veteran service officers who attend a school of
72 instruction within the State of Mississippi for such county
73 veteran service officers.

74 It shall also be the duty of the boards of supervisors to aid
75 the United States to defeat all unjust claims for aid or benefit
76 therefrom.

77 Such expenditures may be made by the several counties acting
78 alone, or in cooperation with other counties, and in cooperation
79 with any federal or state agency carrying out such purposes.

80 In the event that the general revenues of the county levied
81 under and within the limits of existing taxing statutes are not
82 sufficient to pay the expenses authorized herein, the board of
83 supervisors may, in its discretion, levy an additional tax not to
84 exceed one (1) mill on all taxable property in the county to
85 defray such expenses or any part thereof. Any tax levy made under
86 authority of this chapter shall not be considered in refunding
87 homestead exemption losses under Title 27, Chapter 33, Mississippi
88 Code of 1972.

89 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
90 and after July 1, 2023.

