

By: Representative Crawford

To: Wildlife, Fisheries and  
Parks

HOUSE BILL NO. 796

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 55-3-33, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO  
2 AUTHORIZE THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, FISHERIES AND  
3 PARKS TO PROVIDE A DISCOUNT ON ADMISSIONS TO STATE PARKS TO SENIOR  
4 CITIZENS AGE 65 YEARS AND OLDER; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

6 **SECTION 1.** Section 55-3-33, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
7 amended as follows:

8 55-3-33. (1) The Mississippi Department of Wildlife,  
9 Fisheries and Parks may:

10 (a) Take charge and have full jurisdiction and control  
11 over all state parks, which parks shall be operated for the  
12 purpose of providing outdoor recreational activities and enjoyment  
13 for the citizens of the State of Mississippi and for the purpose  
14 of attracting visitors to the state.

15 (b) Set up a uniform accounting procedure for the state  
16 parks and prescribe the manner in which books, records and  
17 accounts shall be kept, which procedure shall account for all  
18 monies taken in and expended by the various parks and shall  
19 provide for periodic audits of such books.



20 (c) Accept gifts, bequests of money or other property,  
21 real or personal, to be used for the purpose of advancing the  
22 recreation and conservation interests in state parks. The  
23 department is authorized, subject to approval by the State  
24 Legislature, to purchase property, real or personal, to be used  
25 for state park purposes.

26 (d) Contract with the State Transportation Commission,  
27 any municipality or board of supervisors of the state for  
28 locating, constructing and maintaining roads and other  
29 improvements in state parks and for payment of a part of the costs  
30 thereof; however, no county or municipality more than twenty-five  
31 (25) miles distant from a state park may contract for, or do, or  
32 pay for any such work for a state park other than the  
33 International Gardens of Mississippi. Any county or municipality  
34 authorized to assist financially under the provisions of Sections  
35 55-3-31 through 55-3-51 is authorized, in the discretion of its  
36 respective governing authority, to set aside, appropriate and  
37 expend monies from the General Fund for the purpose of defraying  
38 such expense after a mandatory election is held on the question  
39 within the county or municipality.

40 (e) Designate employees as peace officers with power to  
41 make arrests for infraction of the rules and regulations of the  
42 department. Such officers are authorized to carry weapons and to  
43 enforce the laws of the State of Mississippi within the confines  
44 of a state park.



45           (f) Enforce and delegate the responsibility to enforce  
46 all reasonable rules and regulations governing the occupancy and  
47 use of lands and waters in state parks under its jurisdiction,  
48 supply recreational and conservation facilities and charge fees  
49 for the use of same; review all rates and charges for facilities  
50 and accommodations furnished at the various state parks annually,  
51 making such charges as are justified; and establish fees for  
52 entrance to state parks.

53           (g) To periodically establish a discounted fee or fees  
54 for the entry and use of selected state parks and recreational  
55 facilities. The discounted fee or fees shall only be used for the  
56 purpose or purposes of marketing and promotion to increase the  
57 patronage and revenue of those selected parks and facilities. The  
58 discounted fee or fees shall not be considered a donation of state  
59 property. However, in providing discounted rates, the department  
60 shall provide a permanent discount to senior citizens who are age  
61 sixty-five (65) years and older in the amount of ten percent (10%)  
62 of the fees established for admission to state parks. The  
63 discount provided to senior citizens shall be in addition to any  
64 marketing and promotional discount provided at selected parks and  
65 facilities.

66           Each park shall retain from revenues generated therein, a sum  
67 sufficient to pay necessary expenses of operation, but in no event  
68 to be less than seventy-five percent (75%) of such revenues.



69           (2) The department shall have the authority to lease to any  
70 entity, sell and convey or otherwise transfer to any county or  
71 municipality, or close any state park or historical site within  
72 its jurisdiction which received a general fund subsidy in fiscal  
73 year 1985 in excess of Two Dollars (\$2.00) per visitor to such  
74 state park or historical site; provided, however, that this  
75 authority shall not include the authority to sell, lease or convey  
76 any park that was not in operation under the jurisdiction of the  
77 department for a full fiscal year prior to fiscal year 1986.

78           (3) The department may execute agreements with  
79 rails-to-trails and recreational districts by which the department  
80 will assume responsibility for the operation and maintenance of  
81 trails developed under Sections 55-25-1 through 55-25-15.

82           (4) (a) The department may contract with the electric  
83 public utility with a certificate of public convenience and  
84 necessity to serve the area where a state park is located for the  
85 transfer of ownership of the electrical infrastructure in the  
86 state park to that electric public utility.

87           (b) If the electric public utility enters into an  
88 agreement for the operation and maintenance of electrical  
89 facilities in a state park, the electric public utility may  
90 perform any upgrades to the electrical infrastructure of the park  
91 that are necessary for the electrical infrastructure to be in  
92 compliance with the electric public utility standards. The  
93 electric public utility may assess the costs of the upgrades to



94 the department upon the terms and conditions agreed to by the  
95 department and the electric public utility.

96 (c) The department may contract with the electric  
97 public utility with the certificate of public convenience and  
98 necessity to serve the area for the erection, construction,  
99 maintenance, operation and control of electric distribution  
100 substations, electric transmission lines, electrical  
101 appurtenances, electrical appliances or electrical equipment  
102 necessary or useful in the operation or distribution of electric  
103 power or energy in the state park.

104 (d) Any agreement entered into by the department and an  
105 electric public utility under this subsection is exempt from the  
106 public purchasing requirements under Section 31-7-13.

107 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
108 and after July 1, 2024.

