

By: Representatives Hood, Summers, Hulum

To: Tourism; Appropriations
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HOUSE BILL NO. 1308

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A MISSISSIPPI GOSPEL MUSIC COMMISSION TO
2 DEVELOP A PLAN TO PROMOTE AUTHENTIC MISSISSIPPI GOSPEL MUSIC AND
3 GOSPEL MUSIC CULTURE FOR PURPOSES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT; TO
4 PRESCRIBE THE FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION; TO EMPOWER
5 THE COMMISSION TO ACCEPT AND EXPEND GRANT FUNDS; TO PROVIDE FOR
6 INTERDEPARTMENTAL COOPERATION; TO REQUIRE THE DIVISION OF TOURISM
7 OF THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY TO ESTABLISH A STATEWIDE
8 MISSISSIPPI "GOSPEL MUSIC TRAIL" INFRASTRUCTURE TO OFFER TO
9 TOURISTS AND TARGETED GROUPS A STRUCTURED TOUR OF MISSISSIPPI
10 GOSPEL MUSIC HISTORICAL SITES AND PERFORMANCE VENUES; TO AUTHORIZE
11 THE DIVISION TO DESIGNATE AND ERECT APPROPRIATE MISSISSIPPI GOSPEL
12 MUSIC TRAIL HISTORICAL MARKERS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

14 **SECTION 1.** (1) There is created the Mississippi Gospel
15 Music Commission, hereinafter referred to as the "commission."
16 The commission may accept and expend grants and private donations
17 from any source, including federal, state, public and private
18 entities, to assist it in carrying out its functions.

19 (2) For purposes of this act, the term "gospel music" means
20 gospel, Christian, praise and worship, and related music genres
21 and the culture that created it.

22 (3) The powers, functions and duties of the commission
23 include, but are not limited to, the following:



24 (a) To study, deliberate and report to the Governor and
25 the Legislature before January 1, 2025, on the best method to
26 market and foster an appreciation of gospel, to include tourism,
27 academic study and gospel music archives, gospel music historical
28 preservation, gospel music cultural education and the support of
29 performing artists. The marketing plan must be designed to
30 attract tourists, conferences, music performances, filmmakers and
31 others for the purpose of economic development of all geographic
32 areas of the state through the promotion of gospel music and the
33 heritage and culture that produced gospel music, and to analyze
34 the tourism potential of gospel music for Mississippi.

35 (b) To make an inventory of assets making up gospel
36 music and its culture that could be developed into a program for
37 domestic and international tourism and opportunities for
38 investment.

39 (c) To coordinate with the Division of Tourism of the
40 Mississippi Development Authority, the Department of Archives and
41 History, the Mississippi Department of Transportation, the
42 Mississippi Educational Television Authority, the Board of
43 Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning, the Center for
44 the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi,
45 the Mississippi Arts Commission and similar organizations the
46 sharing of resources and information in order to ensure a
47 comprehensive approach to marketing the gospel music culture in
48 Mississippi.



49 (d) To make recommendations regarding the establishment
50 of, and budgeting for, a permanent Mississippi office of gospel
51 music as an agency of state government with an executive director
52 and appropriate staff to carry out the marketing plan developed by
53 the commission. To the extent practical, any office must be
54 located at an existing public or private location that is
55 appropriate to the gospel music culture in Mississippi with
56 minimal cost to the state.

57 (e) To coordinate the gospel music marketing plan with
58 any existing state historic preservation programs in order to:

59 (i) Identify and preserve gospel music historic
60 properties;

61 (ii) Determine the eligibility of such properties
62 for listing on the National Register;

63 (iii) Prepare nominations of such sites for
64 inclusion on the National Register;

65 (iv) Maintain gospel music historical and
66 archaeological databases; and

67 (v) Evaluate such sites for eligibility for state
68 and federal preservation incentives.

69 (f) To implement and continue the development and
70 creation of the Mississippi Gospel Music Trail as outlined in
71 Section 2 of this act, provide oversight of the trail and its
72 infrastructure, and explore funding opportunities to support
73 continued implementation.



74 (4) The commission must be composed of the following
75 members:

76 (a) The Director of the Division of Tourism of the
77 Mississippi Development Authority;

78 (b) The Executive Director of the Mississippi
79 Department of Archives and History, or his or her designee;

80 (c) The Executive Director of the Mississippi Arts
81 Commission, or his or her designee;

82 (d) The Executive Director of the Mississippi
83 Educational Television Authority, or his or her designee;

84 (e) The Chairman of the Board of the Southern Arts and
85 Entertainment Center, or his or her designee;

86 (f) The Director of the Center for the Study of
87 Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi;

88 (g) The State Director of the USDA Rural Development
89 Agency;

90 (h) Two (2) members of the Mississippi Senate
91 designated by the Lieutenant Governor, who must serve on a
92 nonvoting basis;

93 (i) Two (2) members of the Mississippi House of
94 Representatives designated by the Speaker of the House of
95 Representatives, who must serve on a nonvoting basis;

96 (j) Two (2) members appointed by the Governor, who must
97 have experience in cultural affairs or tourism development in East
98 Central Mississippi; and



99 (k) Four (4) members appointed by the Governor from the
100 state at large, who must have demonstrated a commitment to the
101 understanding and promotion of gospel music.

102 (5) The Governor shall designate one (1) commission member
103 to serve as chairman for a term concurrent with that of the
104 Governor. The commission shall meet upon the call of the chairman
105 not later than August 1, 2024, and shall organize for business by
106 adopting internal organizational procedures necessary for
107 efficient operation of the commission, including officers, quorum
108 requirements and policies for any commission staff. Each member
109 of the commission shall designate necessary staff of his or her
110 respective agency, department, university or business entity, as
111 the case may be, to provide administrative support to assist the
112 commission in performing its duties and responsibilities. The
113 commission shall meet and conduct business at least quarterly.
114 Meetings of the commission must be open to the public, and
115 opportunity for public comment must be made available.

116 (6) Members of the commission shall receive no compensation
117 for their services.

118 (7) The commission shall submit a report, including any
119 proposed legislation, to the Governor and to the Legislature
120 before the convening of the 2025 Regular Session. The report must
121 include a comprehensive state plan for marketing gospel music
122 history as specifically provided above.



123 (8) All departments, boards, agencies, officers and
124 institutions of the state and all subdivisions thereof shall
125 cooperate with the commission in carrying out its purposes under
126 this act.

127 (9) Any funds or donations received by the commission must
128 be deposited into a special fund which is created in the State
129 Treasury, and disbursement therefrom may be made upon warrants by
130 the Department of Finance and Administration after receipt of
131 requisitions submitted by the appropriate person designated by the
132 commission. Monies in the special fund may be used by the
133 commission in carrying out its responsibilities under this act.
134 Unexpended amounts remaining in the special fund at the end of a
135 fiscal year may not lapse into the State General Fund, and any
136 interest earned or investment earnings on amounts in the fund must
137 be deposited to the credit of the special fund.

138 **SECTION 2.** The Division of Tourism of the Mississippi
139 Development Authority shall do the following:

140 (a) Make an inventory of assets making up the gospel
141 music culture that could be developed into a program for domestic
142 and international tourism and opportunities for investment.

143 (b) Establish a statewide Mississippi "Gospel Music
144 Trail" infrastructure to offer to tourists and targeted groups a
145 structured tour of Mississippi gospel music historical sites and
146 performance venues.



147 (c) Designate specific sites for the erection of
148 appropriate Mississippi Gospel Music Trail markers to offer to
149 tourists and targeted groups a structured tour of Mississippi
150 gospel music historical sites and performance venues. The
151 division may purchase appropriate Mississippi Gospel Music Trail
152 markers from any of its available funds. The text for the
153 Mississippi Gospel Music Trail markers must be approved by the
154 division. The Mississippi Department of Transportation shall
155 cooperate with the division by erecting and maintaining the
156 markers that have been approved by the division.

157 (d) Coordinate the Mississippi Gospel Music Trail
158 program with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History,
159 the Mississippi Department of Transportation, the Mississippi
160 Educational Television Authority, the Board of Trustees of State
161 Institutions of Higher Learning, the Center for the Study of
162 Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi, the Delta
163 Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University, the
164 Mississippi Arts Commission and similar organizations in order to
165 share resources and information to ensure a comprehensive approach
166 to marketing the gospel music and gospel music culture in
167 Mississippi.

168 (e) Coordinate the Mississippi Gospel Music Trail
169 marketing plan with any existing state historic preservation
170 program in order to identify and preserve gospel music historic
171 properties and determine the eligibility of such properties for



172 listing on the National Register of Historic Places, and prepare
173 nominations of such sites.

174 **SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
175 and after its passage.

