

By: Representative Roberson

To: Education

HOUSE BILL NO. 1523

1 AN ACT TO CODIFY SECTION 37-7-104.10, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF
2 1972, TO PROVIDE THAT IN THE COPIAH COUNTY AND HAZLEHURST CITY
3 SCHOOL DISTRICTS THERE SHALL BE AN ADMINISTRATIVE CONSOLIDATION
4 INTO ONE SCHOOL DISTRICT TO BE DESIGNATED AS THE COPIAH COUNTY
5 CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2027; TO PROVIDE
6 FOR THE COMPOSITION AND SELECTION OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE
7 NEW COPIAH COUNTY CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT; TO DIRECT THE
8 STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO ADMINISTRATIVELY CONSOLIDATE ANY
9 SCHOOL DISTRICT WHICH DOES NOT VOLUNTARILY FOLLOW THE
10 CONSOLIDATION ORDER; TO ABOLISH THE FORMER SCHOOL DISTRICTS
11 FOLLOWING THE ADMINISTRATIVE CONSOLIDATION AND PROVIDE FOR THE
12 TRANSFER OF SCHOOL DISTRICT ASSETS AND LIABILITIES; TO PROVIDE FOR
13 EXECUTION OF TEACHER AND SCHOOL DISTRICT EMPLOYEE CONTRACTS AND
14 THE PREPARATION OF A SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET IN THE NEW SCHOOL
15 DISTRICT; TO DIRECT THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO PROMULGATE
16 REGULATIONS TO IMPLEMENT SUCH ADMINISTRATIVE CONSOLIDATION; TO
17 AMEND SECTIONS 37-7-103 AND 37-5-7, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, IN
18 CONFORMITY; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

20 **SECTION 1.** The following shall be codified as Section
21 37-7-104.10, Mississippi Code of 1972:

22 37-7-104.10. (1) In Copiah County, Mississippi, in which
23 are located, as of January 1, 2025, two (2) school districts,
24 there shall be an administrative consolidation of all of those
25 school districts in the county into one (1) new countywide school
26 district to be designated as Copiah County Consolidated School



District which shall consist of the territory of the former Copiah County School District and the Hazlehurst City School District, effective on July 1, 2027. At such time that the administrative consolidation becomes effective, the central administrative office of the Copiah County Consolidated School District shall be located in Hazlehurst, Mississippi.

(2) Within two (2) years prior to the date of consolidation, or as soon as practicable after July 1, 2025, a financial advisor and/or other facilitator with school district experience may be assigned by the Mississippi Department of Education to oversee the budgeting and financial matters relating to the consolidation of the districts slated for consolidation. The financial advisor and/or facilitator may, at the discretion of the Mississippi Department of Education, continue duties for one (1) year after the consolidation to ensure that all financial matters are in place. All financial expenditures of districts that are closing must be approved by the financial advisor and/or facilitator. If the superintendent and/or school board approves expenditures outside of this approval, they shall be personally liable for the excess expenditures. The State Board of Education shall determine the compensation to be paid to the financial advisor and/or facilitator which shall be paid by the local school district to which the financial advisor and/or facilitator is assigned.

(3) (a) On or before July 1, 2026, the State Board of Education shall serve the local school boards of the Copiah County



52 School District and the Hazlehurst City School District with
53 notice and instructions regarding the timetable for action to be
54 taken to comply with the administrative consolidation required in
55 this section. The State Board of Education shall provide for the
56 administrative consolidation of Covich County School District and
57 the Hazlehurst City School District on or before July 1, 2027. In
58 the new Covich County Consolidated School District, there shall be
59 a new county board of education elected in a November 2026 special
60 election, which shall be called by the Governor for that purpose.
61 The new county board of education shall be elected and the terms
62 of office established as provided in Section 37-5-7(3). The State
63 Board of Education shall declare that the territory embraced by
64 Covich County, Mississippi, shall be the boundary lines for the
65 territory of the new Covich County Consolidated School District
66 and shall spread a legal description of the new school district on
67 the minutes of its August 2026 meeting and shall serve the
68 applicable school boards and the board of supervisors with an
69 adequate legal description of these new boundaries. It shall be
70 the responsibility of the board of supervisors of such county to
71 apportion the newly consolidated school district into five (5) new
72 single member board of education election districts, which shall
73 be consistent with the supervisors district lines in the county.
74 The board of supervisors of the county shall thereafter publish
75 the same in some newspaper of general circulation in the county
76 for at least three (3) consecutive weeks and after having given



notice of publication and recording the same upon the minutes of the school boards of each appropriate school district in the county, the new district lines will thereafter be effective for the November 2026 special election.

(b) Any school district affected by the required administrative consolidation in Copiah County that does not voluntarily consolidate as ordered by the State Board of Education shall be administratively consolidated by the State Board of Education, to be effective on July 1 following the November 2026 special election of the new school board members. The State Board of Education shall promptly move on its own motion to administratively consolidate a school district which does not voluntarily consolidate in order to enable the affected school districts to reasonably accomplish the resulting administrative consolidation into the Copiah County Consolidated School District by July 1, 2027, following the election of the new board of trustees. The affected school districts shall comply with any consolidation order issued by the State Board of Education on or before July 1 following the election of the new board of trustees.

(4) (a) On July 1, 2027, following the election of the new board of trustees of the Copiah County Consolidated School District, the former county board of education for Copiah County and the former board of trustees of the Hazlehurst City School Districts shall be abolished. All real and personal property which is owned or titled in the name of the school district



located in such former school districts shall be transferred to the new Copleah County Consolidated School District.

(b) The new board of trustees of the Copleah County Consolidated School District shall be responsible for establishing the contracts for teachers, principals, clerical and administrative staff personnel for the 2027-2028 school year and each school year thereafter.

(c) The new board of trustees for the Copleah County Consolidated School District shall appoint the superintendent of schools for the school district. The superintendent of schools for the Copleah County Consolidated School District may appoint an assistant superintendent of schools for the district, but in no instance shall the administrative leadership of the Copleah County Consolidated School District have more than one (1) assistant superintendent of education. The subsequent superintendent of schools of the consolidated school district shall not be elected, but shall thereafter be appointed by the successor board of trustees in the manner provided in Section 37-9-25. It shall be the responsibility of the successor board of trustees to prepare and approve the budget of the new consolidated district, and the successor board of trustees may use staff from the former school districts to prepare the budget. Any proposed order of the State Board of Education directing the transfer of the assets, real or personal property of an affected school district in the county,



shall be final and conclusive for the purposes of the transfer of property required by such administrative consolidation.

(d) Any person or school district aggrieved by an order of the successor newly selected board of trustees of the Copleah County Consolidated School District pursuant to the required administrative consolidation may appeal therefrom within ten (10) days from the date of the adjournment of the meeting at which such order is entered. The appeal shall be taken in the same manner as appeals are taken from judgments or decisions of the board of supervisors as provided in Section 11-51-75, the provisions of which shall be fully applicable to appeals taken hereunder. The board of trustees of the Copleah County Consolidated School District shall not pass upon or approve or disapprove any such order until the time for an appeal therefrom has expired, nor shall the board pass upon or approve or disapprove any such order from which an appeal is taken until said appeal has been finally determined.

(5) Nothing in this section shall be construed to require the closing of any school or school facility, unless the facility is an unneeded administrative office located within a school district which has been abolished under the provisions of this section. All administrative consolidations under this section shall be accomplished so as not to delay or in any manner negatively affect the desegregation of another school district in the county pursuant to court order.



(6) The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules and regulations to facilitate the administrative consolidation of the school districts in Copiah County pursuant to this section. The consolidated districts shall make an election within one (1) year of consolidation concerning the group term life insurance described in subsection (6) of Section 25-15-9.

(7) The County Board of Education and the Superintendent of Education of the former Copiah County School District and the local school board and Superintendent of Schools of the Hazlehurst City School District shall cooperate with the State Department of Education, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this act, for the planning and transition of programs, services and alignment of curriculum for the administratively consolidated school districts.

SECTION 2. Section 37-7-103, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

37-7-103. From and after July 1, 1987, the school board of any school district shall have full jurisdiction, power and authority, at any regular meeting thereof or at any special meeting called for that purpose, to abolish such existing district, or to reorganize, change or alter the boundaries of any such district. In addition thereto, with the consent of the school board of the school district involved, the school board may add to such school district any part of the school district adjoining same, and with the consent of the school board of the



176 school district involved, may detach territory from such school
177 district and annex same to an adjoining district. Provided,
178 however, that the consent of the school board of the school
179 districts involved in implementing the provisions of Section
180 37-7-104, 37-7-104.2, 37-7-104.3, 37-7-104.4, 37-7-104.5,
181 37-7-104.6, 37-7-104.7 * * *, 37-7-104.8 or 37-104.10 shall not be
182 required for the administrative consolidation of such school
183 districts pursuant to the order of the State Board of Education.

184 **SECTION 3.** Section 37-5-7, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
185 amended as follows:

186 37-5-7. (1) On the first Tuesday after the first Monday in
187 May * * * 1954, an election shall be held in each county in this
188 state in the same manner as general state and county elections are
189 held and conducted, which election shall be held for the purpose
190 of electing the county boards of education established under the
191 provisions of this chapter. At such election, the members of the
192 said board from Supervisors Districts * * * 1 and * * * 2 shall be
193 elected for the term expiring on the first Monday of January * * *
194 1957; members of the board from Supervisors Districts * * * 3
195 and * * * 4 shall be elected for a term expiring on the first
196 Monday of January * * * 1959; and the member of the board from
197 Supervisors District * * * 5 shall be elected for a term expiring
198 on the first Monday of January * * * 1955. Except as otherwise
199 provided in subsection (2), all subsequent members of the board
200 shall be elected for a term of six (6) years at the regular



201 general election held on the first Monday in November next
202 preceding the expiration of the term of office of the respective
203 member or members of such board. All members of the county board
204 of education as herein constituted, shall take office on the first
205 Monday of January following the date of their election.

206 (2) On the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November,
207 in any year in which any county shall elect to utilize the
208 authority contained in Section 37-5-1(2), an election shall be
209 held in each such county in this state for the purpose of electing
210 the county boards of education in such counties. At said election
211 the members of the said county board of education from
212 Districts * * * 1 and * * * 2 shall be elected for a term of four
213 (4) years, the members from Districts * * * 3 and * * * 4 shall be
214 elected for a term of six (6) years, and the member from
215 District * * * 5 shall be elected for a term of two (2) years.
216 Thereafter, members shall be elected at general elections as
217 vacancies occur for terms of six (6) years each. All members of
218 the county board of education shall take office on the first
219 Monday of January following the date of their election.

220 (3) (a) Current members of the Board of Trustees of the
221 Greenwood Public School District serving on November 1, 2017,
222 shall continue in office as the new County Board of Education of
223 the Greenwood-Leflore School District until their successors are
224 elected as follows:



(i) The two (2) appointed board members of the Greenwood Public School District whose terms are nearest to expiration shall expire on January 1, 2019, and thereafter become permanently elected positions to be filled by persons elected as board members from Supervisors Districts 2 and 3 in a November 2018 election held for that purpose, in the manner prescribed in Section 37-7-203, and the newly elected members will take office on January 1, 2019, for a term of four (4) years;

(ii) The final two (2) appointed board members of the Greenwood Public School District whose terms are the farthest removed from expiration shall expire on January 1, 2020, and thereafter become permanently elected positions to be filled by persons elected as board members from Supervisors Districts 4 and 5 in a November 2019 election held for that purpose, in the manner prescribed in Section 37-7-203, and the newly elected members will take office on January 1, 2020, for a term of four (4) years; and

(iii) One (1) appointed board member of the Greenwood Public School District whose term is next nearest to expiration shall expire on January 1, 2021, and thereafter become a permanently elected position to be filled by a person elected as a board member from Supervisors District 1 in a November 2020 election held for that purpose, in the manner prescribed in Section 37-7-203, and the newly elected members will take office on January 1, 2021, for a term of four (4) years.



249 (b) All subsequent members shall be elected for a term
250 of four (4) years at the regular general election held on the
251 first Monday in November next preceding the expiration of the term
252 of office of the respective members, and shall take office on
253 January 1 next succeeding the election.

254 (4) On the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November
255 2017, an election shall be held in Holmes County for the purpose
256 of electing the county board of education in the new Holmes County
257 Consolidated School District. At the election, the members of the
258 said county board of education shall be elected from single member
259 board of education districts, which shall be consistent with the
260 supervisors district lines in the county, and shall be elected for
261 an initial term of six (6) years. Subsequent elections for the
262 Holmes County Board of Education shall be held on the first
263 Tuesday after the first Monday in November 2023 and every four (4)
264 years thereafter at the same time and manner as other general
265 elections are held, and the member shall be elected for a term of
266 four (4) years. All members of the county board of education in
267 the new Holmes County Consolidated School District shall take
268 office on the first Monday of January following the date of their
269 election.

270 (5) On the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November
271 2023, an election shall be held in Chickasaw County for the
272 purpose of electing the county board of education in the new
273 Chickasaw County School District. The board of supervisors shall



274 declare and designate posts for each member of the new board. At
275 said election, the members of the said county board of education
276 from Posts One and Two shall be elected for a term of four (4)
277 years, the members from Posts Three and Four shall be elected for
278 a term of three (3) years and the member from Post Five shall be
279 elected for a term of two (2) years. Thereafter, members shall be
280 elected at general elections as vacancies occur for terms of four
281 (4) years each. All members of the county board of education in
282 the new Chickasaw County School District shall take office on the
283 first Monday of January following the date of their election.

284 (6) On the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November
285 2026, an election shall be held in Copiah County for the purpose
286 of electing the county board of education in the new Copiah County
287 Consolidated School District. The board of supervisors shall
288 declare and designate posts for each member of the new board. At
289 the election, the members of the said county board of education
290 shall be elected from single member board of education districts,
291 which shall be consistent with the supervisors district lines in
292 the county, and shall be elected for an initial term of six (6)
293 years. Subsequent elections for the Holmes County Board of
294 Education shall be held on the first Tuesday after the first
295 Monday in November 2032 and every four (4) years thereafter at the
296 same time and manner as other general elections are held, and the
297 member shall be elected for a term of four (4) years. All members
298 of the county board of education in the new Copiah County



299 Consolidated School District shall take office on the first Monday
300 of January following the date of their election.

301 **SECTION 4.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
302 and after July 1, 2025.

