

By: Senator(s) Michel

To: Wildlife, Fisheries and
Parks

SENATE BILL NO. 2276

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 49-7-31, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO
2 EXTEND THE OPEN SEASON ON DEER, WHEN IT ENDS ON A FRIDAY, TO 30
3 MINUTES AFTER SUNSET ON THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY; TO AMEND SECTION
4 49-7-31.2, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO EXTEND THE OPEN SEASONS ON
5 BOBWHITE QUAIL AND WILD TURKEY, WHEN THEY END ON FRIDAY, TO 30
6 MINUTES AFTER SUNSET ON THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY; TO AMEND SECTION
7 49-7-31.3, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO EXTEND THE OPEN SEASONS ON
8 SQUIRREL AND RABBITS, WHEN THEY END ON FRIDAY, TO 30 MINUTES AFTER
9 SUNSET ON THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY; TO AMEND SECTION 49-7-31.4,
10 MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO EXTEND THE OPEN SEASON ON FUR-BEARING
11 ANIMALS, INCLUDING ANY ADDITIONAL OPEN SEASON ON RACCOON, WHEN IT
12 ENDS ON A FRIDAY, TO 30 MINUTES AFTER SUNSET ON THE FOLLOWING
13 SUNDAY; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

15 **SECTION 1.** Section 49-7-31, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
16 amended as follows:

17 49-7-31. (1) The open season on deer shall be as follows:

18 (a) With bow and arrow: October 1 through the Friday
19 prior to Thanksgiving.

20 (b) With guns and with dogs: from the Saturday prior
21 to Thanksgiving through December 1.

22 (c) With primitive weapons and without dogs: December
23 2 through December 15.



24 (d) With guns and without dogs: December 16 through
25 December 23. However, the commission may allow hunting statewide
26 or in specific areas with any legal weapon which it may designate
27 without dogs after the end of the last season for hunting deer
28 with guns and with dogs, but the season with legal designated
29 weapons and without dogs shall not extend beyond January 31.

30 (e) The commission shall establish an extended season
31 with primitive weapons and bow and arrow without dogs from
32 February 1 through February 15 for the area south of U.S. Highway
33 84 and east of Mississippi Highway 35 only for legal bucks. Any
34 antlered deer taken in this area during any open season under this
35 section must be a legal buck as defined in this paragraph. For
36 purposes of this paragraph, the term "legal buck" means a deer
37 with antlers of four (4) points or more with a minimum inside
38 spread of ten (10) inches or a minimum main beam length of
39 thirteen (13) inches. The commission may regulate the taking of
40 deer with antlers of four (4) points or less under this paragraph
41 for the proper management of antlered deer. The commission may
42 delay the opening date and change the length of bow and arrow
43 season in paragraph (a) in this area.

44 (f) With guns and with dogs: December 24 through a
45 date fixed by the commission that will provide a total of
46 thirty-nine (39) days of hunting deer with guns and with dogs when
47 added to the number of days provided for hunting deer with guns
48 and with dogs in paragraph (b).



(g) When the open season on deer ends on a Friday, * * * the season shall extend until thirty (30) minutes after sunset on the following Sunday.

(2) The commission may set and regulate the deer seasons on wildlife management areas which it administers.

(3) (a) The commission may allow the harvesting of antlerless deer in the districts or zones upon the recommendation of the executive director based upon good and substantial quantitative data and research evaluations that demonstrate that the harvesting is necessary to properly manage the herd.

(b) The commission, only upon the recommendation of the executive director, may allow the harvesting of antlerless deer during the deer season with guns and with dogs by a majority vote of the commission.

(c) Nothing in this subsection prohibits the harvesting of either-sex deer by landowners or leaseholders on private lands under the deer management assistance program prescribed or approved by the executive director.

(4) The commission may provide a special permit for the harvesting of deer when they are depredating and destroying crops. The department shall supervise the harvesting and provide for the salvaging of the meat of the animals. The commission may authorize the department to assist any farmer in this state, who sustains crop damage by wildlife, in eradication of the problem wildlife.



(5) (a) During any open season on deer with primitive weapons after November 30, a person may use any legal weapon of choice on private lands only, if the person is:

- (i) The title owner of the land;
- (ii) The lessee of the hunting rights on the land;
- (iii) A member of a hunting club leasing the hunting rights on the land; or
- (iv) A guest of a person specified in subparagraph (i), (ii) or (iii).

(b) If the person is required to have a hunting license, the person must have a primitive weapon license, Sportsman's License or a Lifetime Sportsman's License.

(6) The commission shall establish and regulate special hunts during velvet hunting season, outside of the regular open season on deer, as provided in Section 49-7-31.6.

SECTION 2. Section 49-7-31.2, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

49-7-31.2. The open season for game birds shall be as follows:

(a) On bobwhite quail: The season shall open on Thanksgiving Day and run through the first Saturday in March next following. When the open season ends on a Friday, * * * the season shall extend until thirty (30) minutes after sunset on the following Sunday.



(b) On pheasant: There shall be no open season on pheasant.

(c) On wild turkey: The commission may fix the spring season between March 1 and May 15. In addition, the commission may fix special fall either-sex seasons. When the open season ends on a Friday, * * * the season shall extend until thirty (30) minutes after sunset on the following Sunday.

(d) On migratory birds: The open season for migratory birds shall be the season prescribed by the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty regulations.

SECTION 3. Section 49-7-31.3, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

49-7-31.3. The open season on game animals except deer shall be as follows:

(a) On squirrel: The season shall open on October 1 and run through February 28 next following. In addition, the commission is authorized to set a season that shall open not earlier than May 15 and run not later than June 1 next following. When the open season ends on a Friday, * * * the season shall extend until thirty (30) minutes after sunset on the following Sunday.

(b) On rabbits: The season shall open on the Saturday nearest October 15 and run through February 28 next following, and when rabbits are depredating or destroying crops, the owner of the crops or his tenants may shoot the rabbits with guns. When the



open season ends on a Friday, * * * the season shall extend until thirty (30) minutes after sunset on the following Sunday.

SECTION 4. Section 49-7-31.4, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

49-7-31.4. (1) The commission may fix the open season on fur-bearing animals between November 1 and March 15 next following and fix the open season for hunting opossums, raccoons and bobcats with dogs and guns by licensed hunters from October 1 to March 15 next following; but raccoons and bobcats may be run, hunted, chased or pursued throughout the year with dogs by licensed hunters.

(2) The commission may establish an additional open season on raccoon from July 1 through October 1, and the bag limit on raccoon during the additional open season shall be one (1) per party, per night.

(3) When the open season on fur-bearing animals, including any additional open season on raccoon, ends on a Friday, * * * the season shall extend until thirty (30) minutes after sunset on the following Sunday.

SECTION 5. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2025.

