

By: Representatives Ellzey, Hamilton

To: Military Affairs

HOUSE BILL NO. 542

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 35-3-21, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO
2 REVISE THE CRITERIA FOR SELECTING COUNTY VETERAN SERVICE OFFICERS;
3 AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

5 SECTION 1. Section 35-3-21, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
6 amended as follows:

7 35-3-21. In order to maintain offices and pay personnel for
8 the purpose of assisting all residents of the State of Mississippi
9 who served in the military or naval forces of the United States
10 during any war, their relatives, beneficiaries or dependents, to
11 receive from the United States any and all compensation,
12 hospitalization, insurance or other aid or benefits to which they
13 may be entitled under existing or hereafter enacted laws of the
14 United States, the boards of supervisors in the various counties
15 in the state are hereby authorized and empowered, in their
16 discretion, to expend out of the general county fund, or special
17 veterans' fund herein authorized to be set up, or from both of
18 such funds, such monies necessary to defray the office operating
19 expenses and salary of the county veteran service officers.

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

26 County veteran service officers shall be selected in the
27 following order: (a) honorably discharged or honorably released



28 veterans of any war or police action in which the Armed Forces of
29 the United States have been, are or shall be committed for action,
30 with first preference going to disabled American Veterans
31 according to their percent of disability, with the highest percent
32 of disability controlling followed by veterans without disability;
33 (b) the surviving spouse or child of any such deceased veteran; or
34 (c) any person employed as a county veteran service officer in any
35 county of this state on March 30, 1990. From and after July 1,
36 1990, county veteran service officers shall be certified by the
37 Mississippi State Veterans' Affairs Board which, among any other
38 criteria it may establish, shall require such officers to (a)
39 attend at least one (1) of the two (2) annual training programs
40 provided for such officers and (b) successfully complete a written
41 examination each year on the duties and responsibilities of and
42 assistance available to such officers and veterans. The programs
43 shall be developed by the State Veterans' Affairs Board. The
44 program shall include a period of instruction which shall be not
45 more than three (3) days for veteran service officers receiving
46 initial certification, and not more than two (2) days for veteran
47 service officers being recertified. County veteran service
48 officers who annually receive and complete such instruction in a
49 manner satisfactory to the Veterans' Affairs Board and in
50 accordance with this section shall be certified by the board. No
51 county veteran service officer shall be entitled to receive any
52 compensation for his services, to which he is otherwise entitled
53 by law, unless he is annually certified by the board.

54 County veteran service officers may be employed, in the
55 discretion of the boards of supervisors, either full time or part
56 time, but may not hold any other elective or appointive position.
57 However, this paragraph shall not apply to county veteran service
58 officers who may be serving in such capacity before March 31,
59 1990.



60 The boards of supervisors of the various counties are further
61 authorized and empowered to pay all necessary and actual expenses
62 of county veteran service officers who attend a school of
63 instruction within the State of Mississippi for such county
64 veteran service officers.

65 It shall also be the duty of the boards of supervisors to aid
66 the United States to defeat all unjust claims for aid or benefit
67 therefrom.

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

71 In the event that the general revenues of the county levied
72 under and within the limits of existing taxing statutes are not
73 sufficient to pay the expenses authorized herein, the board of
74 supervisors may, in its discretion, levy an additional tax not to
75 exceed one (1) mill on all taxable property in the county to
76 defray such expenses or any part thereof. Any tax levy made under
77 authority of this chapter shall not be considered in refunding
78 homestead exemption losses under Title 27, Chapter 33, Mississippi
79 Code of 1972.

80 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from
81 and after July 1, 2001.

