

By: Senator(s) Walls (By Request)

To: Judiciary

SENATE BILL NO. 2478

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 97-3-21, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO  
 2 ELIMINATE DEATH AS A PENALTY FOR CAPITAL MURDER; TO AMEND SECTIONS  
 3 99-19-101 AND 99-19-103, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO CONFORM; TO  
 4 REPEAL SECTION 99-19-87, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH PROVIDES  
 5 FOR NONABROGATION OF THE DEATH PENALTY; TO REPEAL SECTION  
 6 99-19-105, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH PROVIDES THE MANNER IN  
 7 WHICH AUTOMATIC APPEAL OF THE DEATH PENALTY TO THE SUPREME COURT  
 8 IS HAD; TO REPEAL SECTION 99-19-106, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,  
 9 WHICH PROVIDES FOR THE MANNER OF EXECUTION OF THE DEATH SENTENCE;  
 10 TO AMEND SECTION 99-19-107, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH  
 11 PROVIDES FOR THE EVENTUALITY THAT THE DEATH SENTENCE IS FOUND  
 12 UNCONSTITUTIONAL; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

14 **SECTION 1.** Section 97-3-21, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
 15 amended as follows:

16 97-3-21. Every person who shall be convicted of murder shall  
 17 be sentenced by the court to imprisonment for life in the State  
 18 Penitentiary.

19 Every person who shall be convicted of capital murder shall  
 20 be sentenced \* \* \* (a) to imprisonment for life in the State  
 21 Penitentiary without parole; or (b) to imprisonment for life in  
 22 the State Penitentiary with eligibility for parole as provided in  
 23 Section 47-7-3(1)(f).

24 **SECTION 2.** Section 99-19-101, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
 25 amended as follows:

26 99-19-101. (1) Upon conviction or adjudication of guilt of  
 27 a defendant of capital murder or other capital offense, the court  
 28 shall conduct a separate sentencing proceeding to determine  
 29 whether the defendant should be sentenced to \* \* \* life  
 30 imprisonment without eligibility for parole or life imprisonment.  
 31 The proceeding shall be conducted by the trial judge before the  
 32 trial jury as soon as practicable. If, through impossibility or



33 inability, the trial jury is unable to reconvene for a hearing on  
34 the issue of penalty, having determined the guilt of the accused,  
35 the trial judge may summon a jury to determine the issue of the  
36 imposition of the penalty. If the trial jury has been waived, or  
37 if the defendant pleaded guilty, the sentencing proceeding shall  
38 be conducted before a jury impaneled for that purpose or may be  
39 conducted before the trial judge sitting without a jury if both  
40 the State of Mississippi and the defendant agree thereto in  
41 writing. In the proceeding, evidence may be presented as to any  
42 matter that the court deems relevant to sentence, and shall  
43 include matters relating to any of the aggravating or mitigating  
44 circumstances. However, this subsection shall not be construed to  
45 authorize the introduction of any evidence secured in violation of  
46 the Constitutions of the United States or of the State of  
47 Mississippi. The state and the defendant and/or his counsel shall  
48 be permitted to present arguments for or against the  
49 sentence \* \* \*.

50 (2) After hearing all the evidence, the jury shall  
51 deliberate on the following matters:

52 (a) Whether sufficient factors exist as enumerated in  
53 subsection (7) of this section;

54 (b) Whether sufficient aggravating circumstances exist  
55 as enumerated in subsection (4) of this section;

56 (c) Whether sufficient mitigating circumstances exist  
57 as enumerated in subsection (5) of this section, which outweigh  
58 the aggravating circumstances found to exist; and

59 (d) Based on these considerations, whether the  
60 defendant should be sentenced to life imprisonment or life  
61 imprisonment without eligibility for parole \* \* \*.

62 (3) For the jury to impose a sentence of life imprisonment  
63 without eligibility for parole, it must unanimously find in  
64 writing the following:



65           (a) That sufficient aggravating circumstances exist as  
66 enumerated in subsection (4) of this section; and

67           (b) That there are insufficient mitigating  
68 circumstances, as enumerated in subsection (5), to outweigh the  
69 aggravating circumstances.

70           \* \* \* If, after the trial of the penalty phase, the  
71 jury does not make the findings requiring \* \* \* life imprisonment  
72 without eligibility for parole, or is unable to reach a decision,  
73 the court shall impose a sentence of life imprisonment.

74           (4) Aggravating circumstances shall be limited to the  
75 following:

76           (a) The capital offense was committed by a person under  
77 sentence of imprisonment.

78           (b) The defendant was previously convicted of another  
79 capital offense or of a felony involving the use or threat of  
80 violence to the person.

81           (c) The defendant knowingly created a great risk of  
82 death to many persons.

83           (d) The capital offense was committed while the  
84 defendant was engaged, or was an accomplice, in the commission of,  
85 or an attempt to commit, or flight after committing or attempting  
86 to commit, any robbery, rape, arson, burglary, kidnapping,  
87 aircraft piracy, sexual battery, unnatural intercourse with any  
88 child under the age of twelve (12), or nonconsensual unnatural  
89 intercourse with mankind, or felonious abuse and/or battery of a  
90 child in violation of subsection (2) of Section 97-5-39,  
91 Mississippi Code of 1972, or the unlawful use or detonation of a  
92 bomb or explosive device.

93           (e) The capital offense was committed for the purpose  
94 of avoiding or preventing a lawful arrest or effecting an escape  
95 from custody.

96           (f) The capital offense was committed for pecuniary  
97 gain.



98 (g) The capital offense was committed to disrupt or  
99 hinder the lawful exercise of any governmental function or the  
100 enforcement of laws.

101 (h) The capital offense was especially heinous,  
102 atrocious or cruel.

103 (5) Mitigating circumstances shall be the following:

104 (a) The defendant has no significant history of prior  
105 criminal activity.

106 (b) The offense was committed while the defendant was  
107 under the influence of extreme mental or emotional disturbance.

108 (c) The victim was a participant in the defendant's  
109 conduct or consented to the act.

110 (d) The defendant was an accomplice in the capital  
111 offense committed by another person and his participation was  
112 relatively minor.

113 (e) The defendant acted under extreme duress or under  
114 the substantial domination of another person.

115 (f) The capacity of the defendant to appreciate the  
116 criminality of his conduct or to conform his conduct to the  
117 requirements of law was substantially impaired.

118 (g) The age of the defendant at the time of the crime.

119 \* \* \*

120 **SECTION 3.** Section 99-19-103, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
121 amended as follows:

122 99-19-103. The statutory instructions as determined by the  
123 trial judge to be warranted by the evidence shall be given in the  
124 charge and in writing to the jury for its deliberation. The  
125 jury \* \* \* shall designate in writing, signed by the foreman of  
126 the jury, the statutory aggravating circumstance or circumstances  
127 which it unanimously found beyond a reasonable doubt. \* \* \* If  
128 the jury cannot, within a reasonable time, agree as to punishment,  
129 the judge shall dismiss the jury and impose a sentence of  
130 imprisonment for life.



131           **SECTION 4.** Section 99-19-87, Mississippi Code of 1972, which  
132 provides that nothing in Sections 99-19-81 through 99-19-87 shall  
133 abrogate or affect punishment by death, is repealed.

134           **SECTION 5.** Section 99-19-105, Mississippi Code of 1972,  
135 which provides the manner in which automatic appeal of the death  
136 penalty to the Supreme Court is had, is repealed.

137           **SECTION 6.** Section 99-19-106, Mississippi Code of 1972,  
138 which provides for the manner of the execution of the death  
139 sentence, is repealed.

140           **SECTION 7.** Section 99-19-107, Mississippi Code of 1972,  
141 which provides for the eventuality that the death sentence is  
142 found unconstitutional, is repealed.

143           **SECTION 8.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
144 and after July 1, 2002.

