

By: Senator(s) Hewes

To: Ports and Marine
Resources

SENATE BILL NO. 2966

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 49-15-21 TO REMOVE REFERENCE TO
2 NONEXISTENT POSITION AND AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE
3 DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES TO SUPERVISE THE RESERVE OFFICER
4 UNIT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

6 **SECTION 1.** Section 49-15-21, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
7 amended as follows:

8 49-15-21. (1) The executive director shall appoint the
9 necessary enforcement officers for the administration of this
10 chapter. The salary of all enforcement officers employed shall be
11 as determined by the State Personnel Board. However, the members
12 of the Enforcement Officers' Reserve Unit created in subsection
13 (4) shall serve without pay, and shall not be employees of the
14 State of Mississippi for purposes of the State Personnel System,
15 the Workers' Compensation Law, the Public Employees' Retirement
16 System or the State Employees' Life and Health Insurance Plan.

17 (2) All enforcement officers shall be experienced and
18 qualified persons thoroughly familiar with the seafood business
19 and shall be at least twenty-one (21) years of age and be a high
20 school graduate or its equivalent. The enforcement officers
21 shall diligently enforce all laws and regulations for the
22 protection, propagation, preservation or conservation of all
23 saltwater aquatic life of the State of Mississippi, and they are
24 hereby constituted peace officers of the State of Mississippi,
25 with full police power and jurisdiction to enforce all laws of
26 the State of Mississippi and all regulations adopted and
27 promulgated by the commission. Enforcement officers may
28 exercise such powers in any county of the State of Mississippi



29 and on any waters of the state, and they are hereby authorized
30 to carry firearms or other weapons, concealed or otherwise, and
31 they shall investigate all persons, corporations and otherwise
32 who are alleged to have violated any laws, and make affidavits,
33 arrests and serve papers of any court of competent jurisdiction,
34 in like manner as is provided for sheriffs and deputy sheriffs,
35 when the same shall be in connection with the enforcement of the
36 seafood laws of the State of Mississippi and such other laws and
37 regulations of this state as the commission may designate. The
38 enforcement officers may seize at any time aquatic life caught,
39 taken or transported in a manner contrary to the laws of this
40 state, and may confiscate and dispose of the same. Any net or
41 other paraphernalia used or employed in connection with a
42 violation may be seized, and forfeiture proceedings may be
43 instituted * * *. Enforcement officers may draft the aid of
44 captains, crews and boats or licensed vessels to enforce this
45 chapter and may, without warrant, board and search vessels or
46 vehicles. The application for any license or permit from the
47 commission to catch, fish, take, transport or handle or process
48 any form of aquatic life, or the taking, catching, transporting
49 or handling or processing of any and all aquatic life in this
50 state shall constitute acquiescence and agreement upon the part
51 of the owners, captains and crews, employers and dealers to the
52 provisions of this chapter and the agreement that enforcement
53 officers may exercise the authority granted under the provisions
54 hereof.

55 (3) Prior to entering into performance of their duties or
56 delegations or as soon after appointment as possible, each
57 enforcement officer, at the expense of the commission, shall
58 attend and complete an appropriate curriculum in the field of law
59 enforcement at the Mississippi Law Enforcement Officers' Training
60 Academy or other law enforcement training program approved under
61 Section 45-6-7. However, members of the Enforcement Officers'



62 Reserve Unit created in subsection (4) of this section may attend
63 the Mississippi Law Enforcement Officers' Training Academy at the
64 expense of the commission if it deems the training necessary or
65 desirable. No enforcement officer shall be entitled to payment of
66 salary after the first six (6) months in office if he has either
67 failed to attend the academy or has failed to comply with other
68 qualifications or successfully complete any law enforcement
69 qualification examinations as the director deems necessary. The
70 enforcement officers shall, on a periodic basis, be required to
71 attend additional advanced courses in law enforcement in order
72 that they will be properly improved and trained in the modern,
73 technical advances of law enforcement.

74 (4) (a) There is hereby created an Enforcement Officers'
75 Reserve Unit, hereinafter termed "the reserve," to assist the
76 enforcement officers in the performance of their duties under this
77 chapter. The reserve shall consist of volunteers who are approved
78 by the Executive Director of the Department of Marine Resources,
79 or his designee. * * * The members of the reserve shall serve
80 without pay. Reserve officers shall be in such numbers as
81 determined by the enforcement needs, with the maximum strength of
82 reserve officers limited to the same number as enforcement
83 officers.

84 (b) To be eligible for membership in the reserve, an
85 applicant must be twenty-one (21) years of age, be a high school
86 graduate or its equivalent, be in good physical condition, have a
87 Mississippi driver's license, be in good standing with the
88 community, be available for training and duty, not be a member of
89 any police, auxiliary police, civil defense, or private security
90 agency, have never been convicted of a felony, and have one (1) of
91 the following:

92 (i) An honorable discharge or honorable separation
93 certificate from one (1) of the United States military services;



(ii) Three (3) years of responsible post-high school work experience that required the ability to deal effectively with individuals and groups of persons;

(iii) Successful completion of sixty (60) semester hours at an accredited college or university; or

(iv) The qualifications as are outlined in this section for enforcement officers.

Members of the immediate family of enforcement officers shall not be eligible for the reserve unless a special waiver is granted.

Upon acceptance into the reserve, members shall receive a temporary appointment for one (1) year. During this year of temporary status, members must successfully complete the required training and must qualify on the same firearms course as enforcement officers.

(c) The reserve shall be under the leadership and direction of the executive director, or his designee. The training of the reserve shall be conducted by an enforcement officer. The reserve shall meet at least once each month for the purpose of training and transacting any business as may come before it. The executive director shall be notified in writing of all meetings of the reserve and the time and place of the meetings shall be recorded with the executive director. The executive director shall prepare a reserve officer's manual with the advice and consent of the commission. The manual shall include, but is not limited to, the following: activities and operations, training, administration and duties. During active service, the reserve shall be under the direction of the executive director, or his designated representative. When a reserve officer is on active duty and assigned to a specific enforcement officer, he shall be under the direct supervision of that officer. Reserve officers serve at the discretion of the executive director and may be dismissed by him * * *. Reserve officers shall furnish their



own uniforms and other personal equipment if the executive director does not provide such items.

(d) The executive director may * * * require members of the Enforcement Officers' Reserve Unit to attend officer reserve training programs conducted by county or municipal agencies.

(e) The executive director may issue uniforms to such reserve officers and may authorize the issuance of any state equipment necessary for the reserve officers to adequately assist law enforcement officers. The executive director may develop a reserve officer identification system to accomplish the issuance of such items in accordance with the State Auditor guidelines.

(f) If the executive director determines that a member of the Enforcement Officers' Reserve Unit may attend a training program as authorized under this section, it shall require that reserve officer to sign an agreement, prior to attending a training program, which shall stipulate that if the reserve officer accepts employment from any other public or private law enforcement agency within three (3) years after completion of his training program, the reserve officer or the respective hiring law enforcement agency shall reimburse the department for the total cost of his training program. By October 1 of each year, the department shall provide the Conservation and Water Resources Committee of the Mississippi House of Representatives and the Ports and Marine Resources Committee of the Mississippi Senate a listing which contains each name and the respective cost of training each reserve officer received during the previous year.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.

