MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE REGULAR SESSION 2004

By: Senator(s) Little, Albritton, Brown, Browning, Butler, Carmichael, Chamberlin, Chaney, Clarke, Dawkins, Dearing, Flowers, Frazier, Harvey, Hewes, Hyde-Smith, Jackson (11th), Jackson (15th), King, Kirby, Lee (35th), Lee (47th), Mettetal, Michel, Moffatt, Nunnelee, Robertson, Ross, Simmons, Thames, Thomas, Tollison, Walls, White, Wilemon, Williamson

To: Education

SENATE BILL NO. 2446

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-16-13, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO AUTHORIZE LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS TO AWARD HONORARY HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMAS TO VIETNAM WAR VETERANS WHO WERE UNABLE TO GRADUATE DUE TO MILITARY SERVICE; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. Section 37-16-13, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

37-16-13. (1) The school board of a local school district may award an honorary high school diploma in a form prescribed and supplied to school districts by the State Board of Education to veterans of World War II, the Korean Conflict and the Vietnam Conflict who were unable to complete their education due to their military service. The honorary diploma is available to any honorably discharged veteran residing in Mississippi who was (a) scheduled to graduate between 1941 and 1955 but was inducted into military service before completing the necessary graduation requirements, or (b) was scheduled to graduate between 1963 and 1970 but volunteered for military service and received the Vietnam Service Ribbon. Family members of deceased eligible veterans may apply for the diploma to be awarded posthumously.

(2) The State Board of Education and State Veterans Affairs Board jointly shall develop a uniform application for persons seeking a diploma under subsection (1) of this section. The application shall request no less than the following information:

(a) The veteran's name, social security number and date of birth;

(b) The last year the veteran was in school and the veteran's grade level during that year;

(c) The year the veteran left school to enter World War II, the Korean Conflict or the Vietnam Conflict;

(d) The year the veteran would have graduated from high school;

(e) The name and location of the school attended;

(f) The date of the veteran's enlistment or draft;

(g) The veteran's service number;

(h) The veteran's date of honorable discharge;

(i) A copy of the veteran's DD-214 form, if available; and

(j) Any other information deemed relevant by the State Board of Education or State Veterans Affairs Board.

The State Board of Education shall provide local school districts, county departments of human services and local veterans services offices with copies of the uniform application.

(3) A person may request an application from any local school district, county department of human services or local veterans services office. Completed applications for a diploma may be submitted to the veteran's local school district, regardless of whether or not the veteran attended school in that district. Upon verifying the information contained in the application, including verifying the veteran's military service information with the State Veterans Affairs Board, and determining the veteran's eligibility for the honorary high school diploma, the local school board may award the diploma to the veteran. The diploma shall indicate clearly that the recipient is a veteran of World War II, the Korean Conflict or the Vietnam Conflict and that the diploma was issued at a later date due to the veteran's participation in the war. The State Department of Education and the State Veterans Affairs Board may work together to provide communities with information about hosting a diploma ceremony on or around Veteran's Day. The diploma shall be provided to the veteran or, if the veteran is deceased, to the veteran's family.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2004.