

By: Representatives Brown,
Watson

To: Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 22

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH WITHIN THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR A
2 SEPARATE OFFICE TO BE KNOWN AS THE OFFICE OF DISASTER ASSISTANCE
3 COORDINATION; TO PROVIDE THAT THE OFFICE SHALL BE THE PRIMARY
4 ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR COORDINATING INFORMATION REGARDING DISASTER
5 ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY FEDERAL AGENCIES OTHER THAN THE FEDERAL
6 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA), BY STATE AGENCIES OTHER THAN
7 THE MISSISSIPPI EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (MEMA), AND BY OTHER
8 PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ENTITIES THAT PROVIDE VARIOUS TYPES OF
9 ASSISTANCE AND BENEFITS TO VICTIMS OF MAJOR NATURAL DISASTERS; TO
10 PROVIDE THAT THE OFFICE SHALL SERVE AS A SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT
11 WHERE INDIVIDUALS AND PUBLIC ENTITIES THAT ARE VICTIMS OF MAJOR
12 DISASTERS MAY OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT ALL FEDERAL AND STATE
13 PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE ASSISTANCE AND BENEFITS TO DISASTER VICTIMS
14 OTHER THAN THOSE PROVIDED BY FEMA OR MEMA, AS WELL AS INFORMATION
15 ABOUT THE AVAILABILITY OF DISASTER-RELATED IN-KIND DONATIONS BY
16 PRIVATE ENTITIES AND INDIVIDUALS; TO PROVIDE THAT THE OFFICE SHALL
17 PROVIDE VICTIMS OF MAJOR DISASTERS WITH ALL OF THE FORMS AND
18 MATERIALS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO RECEIVE THE BENEFITS OF THOSE
19 DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AND DISASTER-RELATED IN-KIND
20 DONATIONS, AND PROVIDE THEM WITH ASSISTANCE IN COMPLETING AND
21 FILING THE APPLICATIONS FOR THOSE PROGRAMS AND IN-KIND DONATIONS;
22 TO PROVIDE THAT THE OFFICE SHALL COORDINATE AND COOPERATE WITH
23 FEMA, MEMA, OTHER FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES AND OTHER PUBLIC AND
24 PRIVATE ENTITIES IN PROVIDING AND SHARING INFORMATION, FORMS AND
25 MATERIALS RELATED TO DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AND
26 DISASTER-RELATED IN-KIND DONATIONS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

28 **SECTION 1.** The Legislature finds and declares the following:
29 When a major natural disaster such as Hurricane Katrina occurs in
30 Mississippi, there are various types of assistance that are
31 available to individuals and public entities through the federal
32 and state governments to help them recover from the disaster. The
33 majority of that assistance comes from the federal government, and
34 most of the federal assistance is provided through the Federal
35 Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). At the state level, most of
36 the assistance is provided through the Mississippi Emergency
37 Management Agency (MEMA). However, there are also programs in
38 other federal and state agencies that provide assistance and
39 benefits to disaster victims, as well as disaster assistance

40 programs run by public and private entities and disaster-related
41 in-kind donations made by private entities and individuals.
42 Because these other disaster assistance programs and in-kind
43 donations are spread out among a number of agencies and entities,
44 disaster victims sometimes are not aware of the existence of these
45 programs and in-kind donations other than those provided through
46 FEMA and MEMA. After a disaster has occurred, it would be very
47 beneficial for the victims of the disaster to have a single entity
48 in the state, one point of contact, where individuals and public
49 entities would be able to obtain information about those other
50 disaster assistance programs and disaster-related in-kind
51 donations, obtain all of the forms and materials necessary in
52 order to receive the benefits of those programs and in-kind
53 donations, and receive assistance in completing and filing the
54 applications for those programs and in-kind donations.

55 **SECTION 2.** There is established within the Office of the
56 Governor a separate and distinct office to be known as the Office
57 of Disaster Assistance Coordination. The office shall be the
58 primary entity responsible for coordinating information regarding
59 disaster assistance provided by federal agencies other than the
60 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), by state agencies
61 other than the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), and
62 by other public and private entities that provide various types of
63 assistance and benefits to victims of major natural disasters.
64 The duties and responsibilities of the office shall be as follows:

65 (a) To serve as a single point of contact where
66 individuals and public entities that are victims of major
67 disasters may obtain information about all federal and state
68 programs that provide assistance and benefits to disaster victims
69 other than those provided by FEMA or MEMA, as well as information
70 about the availability of disaster-related in-kind donations by
71 private entities and individuals;

72 (b) To provide victims of major disasters with all of
73 the forms and materials necessary in order to receive the benefits
74 of those disaster assistance programs and disaster-related in-kind
75 donations, and provide them with assistance in completing and
76 filing the applications for those programs and in-kind donations;

77 (c) To coordinate and cooperate with FEMA, MEMA, other
78 federal and state agencies and other public and private entities
79 in providing and sharing information, forms and materials related
80 to disaster assistance programs and disaster-related in-kind
81 donations;

82 (d) To work with MEMA in coordinating information,
83 revenues, programs and assistance made available in Mississippi by
84 FEMA, whether directly through FEMA or through MEMA; and

85 (e) To perform such other duties relating to disaster
86 assistance information as may be prescribed by the Governor.

87 **SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
88 and after its passage.