

By: Senator(s) Tollison

To: Education;
Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2343

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A TEACHER RETENTION SCHOLARSHIP GRANT
2 PROGRAM TO PROVIDE THAT SCHOLARSHIPS SHALL BE AVAILABLE TO
3 TEACHERS CURRENTLY EMPLOYED IN ANY SCHOOL DISTRICT IN THE STATE
4 WORKING TOWARD A MASTER'S OR DOCTORATE OF EDUCATION DEGREES; TO
5 PLACE SUBSEQUENT SCHOOL DISTRICT EMPLOYMENT AS A CONDITION FOR
6 RECEIPT OF THE SCHOLARSHIP; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

8 **SECTION 1.** (1) There is established the Teacher Retention
9 Grant Program within the State Department of Education. The
10 purposes of the program shall be to retain the qualified teachers
11 already serving as licensed teachers by making available
12 scholarships to persons working towards a Master of Education
13 degree, an Educational Specialist degree or a Doctor of Education
14 degree at an institution of higher learning whose teacher
15 education program is approved by the State Board of Education.

16 (2) Any institution of higher learning in the State of
17 Mississippi which offers a Master of Education degree, an
18 Educational Specialist degree or a Doctor of Education degree may
19 apply to the department for participation in the program.

20 (3) The State Department of Education shall provide funds to
21 participating institutions of higher learning for the purpose of
22 awarding scholarships to licensed teachers currently employed by a
23 school district in Mississippi and pursuing a Master of Education
24 degree, an Educational Specialist degree or a Doctor of Education
25 degree at such institutions while continuing to render service to
26 the state as a licensed teacher in a school district located in
27 the state. The financial scholarship shall be applied to the
28 total cost for tuition, books, materials and fees at the
29 institution in which the student is enrolled, not to exceed an

30 amount equal to the highest total cost of tuition, books,
31 materials and fees assessed by a state institution of higher
32 learning during that school year.

33 (4) Students awarded financial scholarships under the
34 Teacher Retention Grant Program may receive such awards for a
35 maximum of four (4) school years; however, the maximum number of
36 awards which may be made shall not exceed the length of time
37 required to complete the number of academic hours necessary to
38 obtain a Master of Education degree, an Educational Specialist
39 degree or a Doctor of Education degree. Financial scholarships
40 under the program shall not be based upon an applicant's
41 eligibility for financial aid.

42 (5) Subject to the availability of funds, the State Board of
43 Education may provide for professional development and support
44 services as may be necessary for the retention of teachers
45 participating in the program.

46 (6) Any person participating in the program who fails to
47 complete a program of study that will enable that person to obtain
48 a Master of Education degree, Educational Specialist degree or
49 Doctor of Education degree shall become liable immediately to the
50 State Board of Education for the sum of all awards made to that
51 person under the program, plus interest accruing at the current
52 Stafford Loan rate at the time the person abrogates his
53 participation in the program.

54 (7) As a condition for participation in the program, a
55 teacher shall agree to continued employment as a licensed teacher
56 in a school district located in the state, for a period of not
57 less than three (3) years which shall follow those years of
58 service rendered while obtaining the Master of Education degree,
59 Educational Specialist degree or Doctor of Education degree.
60 However, for any person who obtained a baccalaureate degree in
61 education with a financial scholarship under the Critical Needs
62 Teacher Scholarship Program and who entered the Teacher Retention

63 Grant Program before rendering service as a teacher, the period of
64 employment for the purposes of this subsection shall be two (2)
65 years, in addition to the employment commitment required under the
66 Critical Needs Teacher Scholarship Program. Service rendered by a
67 participant as a licensed teacher in a school district in this
68 state before that teacher becomes a participant in the program may
69 not be considered to fulfill the employment commitment required
70 under this subsection. Any person failing to comply with this
71 employment commitment in any required school year shall
72 immediately be in breach of contract and become liable immediately
73 to the State Department of Education for the sum of all
74 scholarships awarded to that person, less one-third (1/3) of the
75 amount of that sum for each year that service was rendered, or for
76 those persons whose required period of employment is two (2)
77 years, less one-half (1/2) of the amount of that sum for each year
78 that service was rendered, plus interest accruing at the current
79 Stafford Loan rate at the time the breach occurs, except in the
80 case of a deferral for cause by the State Board of Education when
81 there is no employment position immediately available upon the
82 teacher's obtaining of the Master of Education degree, Educational
83 Specialist degree or Doctor of Education degree. After the period
84 of such deferral, the person shall resume the required teaching
85 duties or shall become liable to the board under this subsection.
86 If a claim for repayment under this subsection is placed in the
87 hands of an attorney for collection after default, then the
88 obligor shall be liable for an additional amount equal to a
89 reasonable attorney's fee.

90 (8) The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules and
91 regulations necessary for the proper administration of the Teacher
92 Retention Grant Program.

93 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
94 and after July 1, 2006.