



2015
Legislative Session
Summary

CENTER FOR GOVERNMENT AND
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION SERVICE



THE CENTER FOR GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Center for Government and Community Development (GCD) is a unit of the Mississippi State University Extension Service, which is located within the Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine at Mississippi State University.

The center's staff members design and deliver educational programs, training activities, information, and technical assistance in response to the high-priority economic and community development needs of Mississippi communities and their citizens. Participants in GCD programs include local government leaders, community-based organizations, state and local agencies, and business enterprises.

The activities of the center help the university build strong partnerships with agencies, institutions, organizations, and foundations that have a shared commitment to strengthening the well-being of Mississippi communities and supporting the work of local government officials.

The GCD mission also includes providing community leaders, organizations, agencies, businesses, and citizens with high-quality, science-based information on economic and community development topics. This is accomplished through a variety of communication channels, including newsletters, websites, trade magazines, and special reports.

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Legislation Affecting Municipalities

2015 Legislative Session

The following is a brief summary of some specific bills passed during the 2015 Mississippi Legislative Session. This summary is intended to be a synopsis of legislation with particular interest to municipalities and is not intended to be a complete explanation of all the bills passed. For detailed information about a bill, contact the House Docket Room (601-359-3358) or the Senate Docket Room (601-359-3229) for a copy of the bill, or find it online at <http://www.legislature.ms.gov>.

HB 172 Utility Workers Protection Act: An act to amend section 97-3-7, to revise the list of protected personnel, to include a public utility worker, triggering an enhanced penalty under the offenses of simple and aggravated assault.

HB 272 Bad checks; amends multiple code section to include electronically converted checks and electronic commercial debits in the bad check law.

HB 425 Public Service Commission; may not regulate management or internal affairs of certain gas or electricity public utilities. The Commission shall not have jurisdiction over the governance, management or other internal affairs of entities of gas or electricity by cooperative gas or electric power associations to the members thereof as consumers, except as provided by Section 77-3-17, where service is rendered in a municipality;

HB 881 Revises regulations of excavations near underground utility facilities. Provides that any cemetery that begins or expands after July 1 must provide notice to Mississippi 811.

HB885 Autism; require insurance coverage for and regulate practice of applied behavior analysis. A health insurance policy shall provide coverage for the screening, diagnosis, and treatment of autism spectrum disorder. To the extent that the screening, diagnosis, and treatment of autism spectrum disorder are not already covered by a health insurance policy, coverage under this section will be included in health insurance policies that are delivered, executed, issued, amended, adjusted, or renewed in this state, or outside this state if insuring residents of this state, on or after January 1, 2016. No insurer can terminate coverage, or refuse to deliver, execute, issue, amend, adjust, or renew coverage to an individual solely because the individual is diagnosed with or has received treatment for an autism spectrum disorder.

HB 1096 Alcoholic beverages; authorize temporary permit for performances at certain theatres and chartership operator's permit. Temporary theatre permit. A temporary theatre permit, not to exceed five (5) days, may be issued to a charitable nonprofit organization that is exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(3) or (4) of the Internal Revenue Code and owns or operates a theatre facility that features plays and other theatrical performances and productions. The permit shall authorize the holder to sell alcoholic beverages, including native wines, to patrons of the theatre during performances and productions at the theatre facility for consumption during such performances and productions on the premises of the facility described in the permit. A temporary theatre permit holder shall obtain all alcoholic beverages from package retailers located in the county in which the permit is issued. Alcoholic beverages remaining in stock upon expiration of the temporary theatre permit may be returned by the permittee to the package retailer for a refund of the purchase price upon consent of the package retailer or may be kept by the permittee exclusively for personal use and consumption, subject to all laws pertaining to the illegal sale and possession of alcoholic beverages. Bill also allows for a Charter ship operator's permit

HB 1214 Engineers and architects; increase amount needed (\$100,000 from \$75,000) for exemption of public works services from certain requirements and include municipalities. Neither the state, nor any of its political subdivisions, such as a county, city or town, shall award construction contracts of any public work involving the practice of engineering or architecture unless the plans, specifications and estimates have been prepared and such work supervised by a registered professional engineer or architect; however, nothing in this subsection shall be held to apply to such public work in which the expenditure does not exceed One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000.00)

SB2003 Public Notice; certain small municipalities may advertise budget hearings by posting notices rather than by publication. Municipalities under 1,500 population only have to place the standard three quarter page ad to advertise budget hearings if they have not increase in millage/taxrates. In place of posting the ad, towns can post in three public places.

SB2093 Authorizes certain electric power associations and electric public utilities to undertake economic development activities. Any generation and transmission electric corporation created under this article may undertake economic development activities, whether directly, indirectly, or in conjunction with other entities, including activities such as providing capital, or investment in or acquisition and development of business or industrial sites and the necessary infrastructure or services needed to attract new or existing businesses or industry, to create or maintain employment opportunities, or otherwise to positively impact its service territory or in some manner promote the sale of electric energy.

SB2207 Alcoholic beverage license tax; eliminate portion retained by the state while maintaining portion paid to local governments. Mississippi imposes a state and local privilege tax and license for the sale of alcohol. This bill eliminates the additional tax leveled at the state level but retains the additional tax at the local level.

SB2323 Death benefits trust fund; create for beneficiaries of local emergency management officials, coroners & deputy coroners. The Department of Public Safety shall make a payment, as provided in this section, in the amount of One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000.00) when a covered individual (directors and assistant directors of local emergency management organizations established under section 33-315-17, and coroners and deputy coroners) while engaged in the performance of the person's official duties, is accidentally or intentionally killed, provided that the killing is not the result of suicide and that the bodily injury is not intentionally self-inflicted.

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