

April 22, 2002

Tommy B. Rogers, Board Attorney
Covington County School District
P.O. Box 1269
Collins, Mississippi 39428

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Thank you for your letter regarding House Bill 803. I appreciate your taking the time to share your thoughts on the legislation with me.

I signed House Bill 803 into law on April 10, 2002. The legislation provides a farmer with a guaranteed right to a five-year extension on his 16th Section agricultural lease if a school district notifies him of its intent to reclassify the land. This enables the farmer to complete his farming operations, while ensuring that the school district will receive 120% of the current rent. House Bill 803 also prevents a farmer from holding a school district "hostage" and preventing reclassification if the school district has a business proposal for reclassifying the land for "commercial" or "industrial" use.

Staff of the Secretary of State's Office worked with legislative committees throughout the session on the bill's language. Votes on the bill in both the House and the Senate overwhelmingly supported the legislation. The Mississippi School Boards Association's lobbyist never expressed concern regarding the legislation. Yours was the only request that my office received to veto House Bill 803.

Please know that I share your commitment to education in Mississippi. I look forward to working with you to ensure that education is a priority for our state and its future.

Very truly yours,

RONNIE MUSGROVE

RM: klr