

Clarion Ledger Article – 6-25-00

Governor Musgrove Calls Special Session For Legislators To Address Portion of the Retirement Bill

On Thursday, June 29, 2000 at 10:00 noon, members of the Mississippi Senate and House of Representatives will gather for a special session to address the portions of House Bill 1281, which provides for any increase in retirement for the members of the Mississippi Legislature and the President of the Senate.

The call reads as follows: An act to repeal the provision of House Bill 1281, enacted during the Regular Session of 2000, specifically, Miss. Code Ann. Sections 25-11-301 through 25-11-319 (as amended), to the extent those provisions provided for any increase in retirement for the members of the Mississippi Legislature and the President of the Senate.

Members of the legislature have been called to discuss only a portion of House Bill 1281 during the special session. The call does not include any portion of the bill that benefits state employees, members of the Mississippi Highway Patrol or teachers because those provisions are needed, and should not be discussed or voted on again.

I have always been opposed to the portion of the bill that increases retirement benefits for the Legislature. The law does not allow the Governor to partially veto this type of legislation; therefore, the options were to veto the entire bill or allow the bill to pass, but without my signature.

Vetoing the entire bill would have done away with those provisions that give benefits to state employees, members of the Mississippi Highway Patrol and teacher. We need those provisions, and I could not allow those needed benefits to go unfilled.

The provisions of the bill that benefit state employees provide a partial lump sum payment equal to as much as three times annual benefits as an alternate retirement option. If state employees choose that option, the member's monthly benefits will be reduced.

Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) members, which includes all state employees, who retire on or after July 1, 2000, with at least 28 years of service credit at any age, or who are at least age 63 with at least 4 years of service credit will be eligible for this option.

Mississippi Highway Safety Patrol Retirement System members eligible for an unreduced service retirement benefit are also eligible for this new option.

This provision will give state employees the option to receive a lump sum of money when they retire, which can be used at their discretion. It will also assist employers by providing incentive for productive employees to continue working beyond their original date for retirement eligibility.