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Chapter No. 400
16/HR43/R266SG
CST 1 6V

HOUSE BILL NO. 475

Originated in House _____ Clerk

HOUSE BILL NO. 475

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 69-37-17, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO EXTEND THE REPEALER ON THE PROVISION OF LAW THAT REQUIRES THE BOLL WEEVIL MANAGEMENT CORPORATION TO PROVIDE AN ANNUAL AUDIT OF ITS ACCOUNTS BY NOVEMBER 15; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. Section 69-37-17, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

69-37-17. (1) At the request of the corporation, the bureau shall authorize a statewide referendum among all Mississippi cotton growers on the question of whether an assessment, not to exceed One Dollar ($1.00) per acre, shall be levied upon all cotton producers to offset, in whole or in part, the cost of maintaining the corporation, conducting referenda, and/or conducting a program to collect data and information on boll weevil populations and control costs. Any assessments levied for data-collecting programs as a result of the referendum shall be in addition to assessments being collected to support any other boll weevil management programs in the state.

(2) At the request of the corporation, the bureau shall authorize a statewide referendum among all Mississippi cotton growers on the question of whether an assessment, not to exceed Twelve Dollars ($12.00) per acre, shall be levied upon all cotton growers to offset, in whole or in part, the cost of managing boll weevil suppression, pre-eradication, eradication, or post-eradication programs authorized by this chapter or by any other law of this state. The programs shall be designed on a statewide basis.

(3) The assessment levied under this chapter shall be based upon the level of boll weevil infestation and the anticipated cost of conducting the proposed program, as determined by available scientific data, and the number of acres of cotton planted in the specified management zone. The maximum amount of the assessment, the period of time for which it shall be levied, how it shall be levied, and when it shall be paid shall be determined by the bureau and the board and established by regulations according to this section. The maximum amount of the assessment, the period of time for which it will be levied, and when the payment is due shall appear on all ballots for the referenda authorized by subsections (1) and (2) of this section.

(4) All cotton growers having membership in a local cotton growers association shall be entitled to vote in any referendum authorized by subsections (1) and (2) of this section, and the bureau, after consultation with the corporation, shall determine

any questions of eligibility to vote. A cotton grower must be growing cotton within this state and be a member of a local cotton growers association in order to be eligible to vote in elections and referenda concerning boll weevil management practices.

(5) Each eligible cotton grower shall be mailed a ballot upon which to cast a vote for or against the boll weevil suppression, pre-eradication, eradication or post-eradication program.

(6) Passage of a referendum under subsection (1) or (2) of this section shall require that at least twenty percent (20%) of the registered cotton growers vote in the referendum and that a majority of those voting statewide approve the referendum.

(7) (a) The assessments collected by the department under this chapter shall be promptly remitted to the State Treasury on behalf of the corporation in the special fund established in paragraph (b) of this subsection to be held in trust for the use and benefit of the corporation in administering the designated boll weevil management program through the suppression, pre-eradication, eradication or post-eradication of boll weevils.

(b) There is created within the State Treasury a special fund to be designated the "Mississippi Boll Weevil Management Corporation Trust Fund" into which shall be deposited all the revenues collected by the department for assessments levied under the provisions of this section. Monies in the fund shall be disbursed upon warrants issued by the State Fiscal

Officer upon requisitions signed by the corporation's board. Monies in the fund shall remain inviolate and any unexpended amounts remaining in the fund at the end of the fiscal year, and any interest earned thereon, shall be divested to the corporation.

(8) (a) The corporation shall provide to the department an annual audit of its accounts performed by a certified public accountant.

(b) (i) The corporation shall provide the annual audit no later than November 15 for the preceding calendar year.

(ii) This paragraph (b) shall stand repealed on July 1, * * * 2020.

(9) The assessments collected by the department under this chapter shall not be considered as "state" funds.

(10) Upon completion or termination of a program, any unused funds shall be transferred to and deposited in the Boll Weevil Management Fund created under Section 69-37-39, for the purpose of being used if there is a future occurrence of a boll weevil outbreak in the state.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2016.

PASSED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
February 24, 2016

Philip Gunn
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PASSED BY THE SENATE
March 24, 2016

Tate Reeves
PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

APPROVED BY THE ~~GOVERNOR~~

Phil Bryant
GOVERNOR

April 11, 2016
9:05 AM