



Mississippi Forestry Association

# Legislative Bulletin

*The Voice of Forestry*

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## Links: MFA Government Affairs

<http://www.msforestry.net/governmentaffairs.php>

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## Legislature Shifts to Floor Action

Legislative activity shifted to floor action last Wednesday after committees pushed more than 500 bills onto the Senate and House calendars by Tuesday's committee action deadline. Many bills died in committee because they were not considered or were not passed. MFA's bill to increase the penalty for trespassing on private land, especially if the trespasser possesses a firearm and commits, or attempts to commit, another crime was not even considered by the House Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks Committee.

Presented below is the status of legislation that should be of interest to MFA members. MFA's Government Affairs Committee reviewed many forestry-related bills on Feb. 14 and sent their legislative position recommendations to the MFA Executive Committee for review and approval. These approved positions were then sent to the MFA Board of Directors for their review and approval as well.

MFA is actively working in the Legislature *on your behalf* to support bills that will:

- prohibit trespassing on private land and the destruction of fisheries habitat by persons "joyriding" ATVs in the beds of streams and rivers designated as public waterways
- increase the penalty for trespassing on private land, especially if the trespasser possesses a firearm and commits, or attempts to commit, another crime
- protect private property rights in eminent domain proceedings by supporting the constitutional definition of public use, or why government can take private land
- ensuring that public building construction standards don't discriminate against Mississippi products, especially wood products
- extend the MS Forestry Commission's authority to hire arson-related law enforcement personnel
- extend the current 9 cent per acre forest protection tax that funds the purchase of forest fire fighting equipment by the MFC

To support MFA's advocacy efforts on behalf of MFA members, MFA's County Forestry Associations, and the entire Mississippi forestry community, contact your representative or senator by calling the Capitol switchboard at 601-359-3770, or visit the Mississippi Legislature's Web site to get email addresses and phone numbers for members of the [House of Representatives](http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/members/hr_membs.xml) [http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/members/hr\\_membs.xml](http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/members/hr_membs.xml) and [Senate](http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/members/ss_membs.xml) [http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/members/ss\\_membs.xml](http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/members/ss_membs.xml)

*Portions of this story are provided courtesy of the Mississippi Manufacturers Association.*

MFA Member  
Question of the Week

**Q:** When is the special election to fill the unexpired term of former U.S. Representative and current U.S. Senator Roger Wicker in Mississippi's First Congressional District?

**A.** According to a news release from Gov. Haley Barbour's office, the special election is April 22. In a Writ of Election filed with the Mississippi Secretary of State, Barbour said if a run-off is required, it would be held on May 13, 2008. He designated March 7, 2008, as the qualifying deadline for candidates in the special U.S. House election. "This schedule will ensure that Senator Wicker's former U.S. House seat will be filled in a manner appropriate under the terms of state statutes," Barbour said. The winning candidate in the special election will serve the remainder of the unexpired term; the seat will be filled on a permanent basis in the general election on Nov. 4, 2008.

Wicker's seat became officially vacant when he resigned on Dec. 31, 2007, to accept an appointment by Governor Barbour to fill the unexpired term of former U.S. Sen. Trent Lott.

*Clarion-Ledger.com*

**Secretary of State Hosemann Presents Voting Reform Package to Legislature**

Today, we have a problem in Mississippi which threatens our system of democracy—voter fraud. This voting reform legislation comprehensively addresses the issues relating to voter fraud in order to strengthen our elections. All of the components of this bill are needed to fight this problem.

*Polls show more than 80-percent of Mississippians believe there was voter fraud in the last election, threatening the ability to govern and the very legitimacy of the Legislative and Executive branches of state government.*

In Senate Bill 2910, a comprehensive reform package, the Secretary of State's office not only hopes to return integrity to our elections, but also to ensure all eligible Mississippians are afforded the right to vote.

The No-Excuse Voting portion of the bill is endorsed by Circuit Clerks, Election Commissioners, and Boards of Supervisors statewide. No-excuse voting will allow eligible Mississippi voters to cast their ballots 15 days prior to an election. This vote will be final and will replace absentee ballots during that period. However, absentee ballots will still be allowed to be cast by servicemen, disabled war veterans, the elderly, and the disabled. Also included in the bill is curbside voting, which is yet another effort by the Secretary of State's office to make casting a ballot much easier for our citizens. Curbside voting would provide for actual voting machines to be taken curbside, to eliminate the potential strain of walking inside a polling facility to our disabled voters.

A re-registration of Mississippi voters is also an important piece of this legislation. Bloated voter rolls are not only wasting valuable time and energies, but they also offer the opportunity for voter fraud and cost state taxpayers thousands of dollars in postal charges for mail-outs such as jury summons to citizens who are deceased or no longer live in the county. **Over 30-percent of Mississippi's counties have more people registered to vote than the number of those who are over the age of 18 and alive in the county.** Under Section 19 of the bill, all voters in Mississippi would be required to re-register to save taxpayer dollars and ensure the integrity of the voting process. For convenience and cost purposes, voters would be considered re-registered if they vote in the upcoming Presidential election or any election in 2009.

**Absentee ballots are also a major source of fraud in Mississippi elections.** Many voters are taken advantage of by unscrupulous citizens, looking to cash-in on someone else's absentee vote. Senate Bill 2910 works to ensure the

absentee ballot voting process is fair and free of fraud. For example, one provision of the bill limits who provides absentee ballots to nursing home residents to the resident, the family, county or municipal election officials, or licensed nursing home administrators. The bill also enacts voter authentication and voter authentication cards. Voters would be required to show acceptable forms of identification at the polls, identical to those required by the federal government when first registering to vote. *Continued on page 3*

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MFA's Mission is leading diverse forestry groups to promote landowner rights, environmental stewardship, member prosperity, and community understanding.

## Voting Reform continued

In a recent *New York Times* editorial, Democratic President Jimmy Carter and Republican Secretary of State James Baker said voters possessing identification at the polls was not a problem in itself—only 1.2-percent of voters lack identification. Our polls in Mississippi show 97-percent of voters had ID at the last election. President Carter and Secretary Baker supported Voter ID laws that “make it easy to vote but tough to cheat.”

Mississippi will not move forward looking over its shoulder. This does not mean we need to lose our collective memory of where we have been. All Mississippians bring their personal lives and experiences to the table. The question is: Will we use those experiences to make Mississippi better, or will we fall back into the same divisions of the past? The Office of the Secretary of State and a great majority of Mississippi's citizens are asking for support and adoption of this election reform.

*Mississippi Secretary of State's Office Press Release*

## 2008 MFA Forestry Bills Tracking List

AS APPROVED BY THE MFA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

*Note: Bill status as of February 22, 2008. Bills will be added and deleted as necessary throughout the Session*

**Recommended MFA Positions: M = monitor, S = support, O = oppose**

## House of Representatives

**HB 140 Mississippi Forestry Commission Law Enforcement Officers;** extend repealer on authority to appoint, <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2008/pdf/history/HB/HB0140.xml>  
01/22 (H) Referred To Forestry, 02/13 (H) Title Suff Do Pass, 02/19 (S) Referred To Forestry, 02/18 (H) Passed [{Vote}](#) 02/19 (H) Transmitted To Senate 02/19 (S) Referred To Forestry

**Committee recommendation: S**

**HB 141 Levy of forest acreage tax; extend repealer,** <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2008/pdf/history/HB/HB0141.xml>  
01/22 (H) Referred To Forestry, 02/13 (H) Title Suff Do Pass, 02/19 (S) Referred To Forestry; Finance, 02/18 (H) Passed [{Vote}](#), 02/19 (H) Transmitted To Senate, 02/19 (S) Referred To Forestry; Finance,

**Committee recommendation: S**

**HB 591 Eminent domain; restrict to direct public use,** <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2008/pdf/history/HB/HB0591.xml>  
01/31 (H) Referred To Judiciary A, 02/05 (H) Title Suff Do Pass Comm Sub, 02/07 (H) Committee Substitute Adopted, 02/07 (H) Amended, 02/07 (H) Passed As Amended [{Vote}](#), 02/08 (H) Transmitted To Senate, 02/11 (S) Referred To Judiciary, Division A

**Committee recommendation: M**

**HB 1357 Mississippi Public Waterways Law;** revise regulations relating to use of ATVs in public waters, <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2008/pdf/history/HB/HB1357.xml>  
02/04 (H) Referred To Conservation and Water Resources; Marine Resources 02/12 (H) DR - TSDP: CR To MR, 02/13 (H) DR - TSDP: MR To CR, 02/13 (H) Title Suff Do Pass 02/20 (H) Passed

**Committee recommendation: S**

## Senate

**SB 2437 Levees; clarify prohibited activities**, <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2008/pdf/history/SB/SB2437.xml>

01/28 (S) Referred To Judiciary, Division B; Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks  
02/13 (S) DR - TSDP: JB to WI, 02/14 (S) Title Suff Do Pass

**Committee recommendation: O**

**SB 2457 Forestry tax; extend repealer on forest acreage tax**, <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2008/pdf/history/SB/SB2457.xml>

01/29 (S) Referred To Forestry; Finance, 02/06 (S) DR - TSDP: FO To FI, 02/07 (S) Title Suff Do Pass, 02/20 (S) Passed, 02/21 (S) Transmitted To House

**Committee recommendation: S**

**SB 2458 Forestry; extend repealer on authority of the Forestry Commission to hire law enforcement officers to investigate arson**, <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2008/pdf/history/SB/SB2458.xml>

01/29 (S) Referred To Forestry, 02/06 (S) Title Suff Do Pass, 02/07 (S) Passed [{Vote}](#), 02/08 (S) Transmitted To House, 02/12 (H) Referred To Forestry

**Committee recommendation: S**

**SB 2680 Executive agency personnel**; remove all from certain State Personnel Board procedures. <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2008/pdf/history/SB/SB2680.xml>

02/04 (S) Referred To Fees, Salaries and Administration, 02/07 (S) Title Suff Do Pass Comm Sub, 02/12 (S) Committee Substitute Adopted, 02/12 (S) Amended, 02/12 (S) Passed As Amended [{Vote}](#), 02/12 (S) Motion to Reconsider Entered 02/13 (S) Motion to Reconsider Tabled, 02/13 (S) Transmitted To House, 02/15 (H) Referred To Fees and Salaries of Public Officers; Appropriations,

**Committee recommendation: M**

**SB 2820 Public waterways**; provide penalty for damaging fish habitat by riding motorized vehicle in the bed of a stream, <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2008/pdf/history/SB/SB2820.xml>

02/04 (S) Referred To Judiciary, Division B, 02/12 (S) Laid on Table Subject to Call, 02/19 (S) Title Suff Do Pass Comm Sub

**Committee recommendation: S with amendment**

**SB 2822 Eminent domain**; restrict to direct public use (Hyde-Smith), <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2008/pdf/history/SB/SB2822.xml>

02/04 (S) Referred To Judiciary, Division A, 02/19 (S) Title Suff Do Pass Comm Sub

**Committee recommendation: S**

**SB 2837 Criminal trespass**; enhance when trespass is knowing and trespasser is in possession of a firearm, <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2008/pdf/history/SB/SB2837.xml>

02/04 (S) Referred To Judiciary, Division B, 02/12 (S) Title Suff Do Pass Comm Sub, 02/20 (S) Passed, 02/22 (S) Transmitted To House

**Committee recommendation: S**

**SB 3007 Public buildings**; authorize use of green building standards in certain major facility projects, <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2008/pdf/history/SB/SB3007.xml>, 02/04 (S) Referred To Environment Prot, Cons and Water Res, 02/13 (S) Title Suff Do Pass

**Committee recommendation: S**