



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 21, 2006

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New Poll Shows Overwhelming Support for State Building Code

Poll Reveals Many Mississippians Under False Sense of Security About Existence of Local Building Codes

Jackson, MS – The Coalition to Build a Safer and Stronger Mississippi released the results of a poll it commissioned last week and said the findings offer convincing evidence that the citizens of Mississippi support adoption of a state building code.

The 600 person survey, conducted last Wednesday through Monday by Southern Research Group, showed that 78 % of Mississippians support adoption of a state building code. The poll carries a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percent.

Senator Mike Chaney of Vicksburg, who introduced a building code reform measure in the Senate, hailed the results of the poll and called on his legislative colleagues in the Mississippi House to heed public sentiment and adopt a meaningful state building code. “Some of my colleagues have been skeptical of the need for building code reform,” said Senator Chaney. “I’m pleased that this poll makes it crystal clear that the people of Mississippi, regardless of whether they live on the coast or not, support having a state building code.”

Senator Chaney noted that in the wake of Hurricane Katrina some counties such as Hancock have adopted building codes without waiting for the legislature to act.

Senator Chaney urged Mississippians to contact their State Representative and ask them to support adoption of a meaningful statewide code.

Recent news reports have highlighted Mississippi's ranking as the state with the most number of fire deaths per thousand. This grim statistic has been linked in part to the state's lack of a uniform building code which allows construction in some counties to take place with no requirements for smoke detectors or other measures that would allow occupants of a burning building more time to escape if modern building practices were used.

The poll also revealed that half of Mississippians believe that their county has modern building codes when in fact only 3 of Mississippi's 82 counties have a minimum code. 74 % of respondents said they would be "angry or concerned" if they learned that their county had no building code in effect.

"The citizens of Mississippi believe they are being protected when in fact they are not," said Marsanne Golsby, spokesperson for the Coalition to Build a Safer and Stronger Mississippi. "We need to stop building homes that are death traps in a fire or disposable in a hurricane."

HB 1406 sets up a state building code and requires mandatory enforcement in the ten counties nearest the Gulf coast as well as any other areas currently enforcing codes. It sets minimum safety standards for new construction and renovation of both commercial and residential structures. The law will set up a building code council to ensure uniform enforcement and increase communication between jurisdictions.

Code-mandated construction requirements will vary depending on the location for hurricane, flood and earthquake resistance but will be uniform with regard to fire resistance. Mississippi is 1 of 2 states in the entire US hurricane coast that does not have a state code in place for both commercial and residential construction.