

November 27, 2002

TO: Steve Osunsami, ABC News
FROM: John Sewell
RE: Mississippi Tort Reform

As I mentioned on the phone, Mississippi has been somewhat of a lightning rod for civil justice reform in recent years. The call for change grew louder this year, especially with the statement from the U.S. Chamber urging businesses to stay away from the state.

I'm attaching a few articles that will provide some background for you – the copy of the Chamber's release, a George Will column that ran in September, and a Fox News story on the Chamber action. Also included is a summary of the legislation that was passed yesterday by the Mississippi Legislature.

Governor Musgrove, a Democrat, called the Legislature into special session on September 5th to specifically address the need for medical malpractice reform. He signed a bill on October 8th, then expanded the call to address general civil justice reform. The tort reform issue has been debated in the Legislature since the late 1980's, with legislation introduced and quickly killed in committees. Under the previous Republican administration, this issue was never really brought to the forefront as it was by Governor Musgrove.

This is a national issue, but Mississippi has really been in the spotlight on this. As the governor told you when you were here for the Nissan story, we're working hard to create jobs during difficult economic times. This is another example of that.

The fact that Governor Musgrove is going to sign this bill is embargoed until further notice. He will sign the bill on Tuesday, December 3, at 4:45pm in the Capitol rotunda (where you interviewed him before).

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to give me a call on my cell at 601-942-7698. I will be out of the office over the holiday weekend, but will have the phone with me. If for some reason you're unable to reach me, you can call Lee Ann Mayo at 601-942-7658. Thanks.