

Governor's Column 7/2/02

Mississippi and America: The proudest homes we could have

As we celebrate America's Independence this year, the holiday has a reinforced meaning. Where many of our children have been spared the conflicts of war and destruction, we were all reminded last September of the price of eternal vigilance. Our nation stands together cherishing our freedoms that are protected by men and women of the Armed Forces and National Guard. The Pledge of Allegiance is one such freedom. Our flag represents many of the core principles of our great nation: peace, opportunity, honor, truth, justice and freedom. I am proud that we enacted a law requiring students to recite the pledge in our public school classrooms and in the presence of our flag.

Throughout Mississippi and America on July 4th, families, congregations, and friends will be joining together to celebrate the independence of our nation. We can celebrate and be thankful for a country where we can worship freely with a sense of peace and comfort.

Members of our Mississippi National Guard continue serving proudly in the *War Against Terrorism*. Military police are now on-station in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, guarding those who would attempt to rob us of our freedoms, and members of our Army Special Forces and Air National Guard are serving overseas supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. Our brave soldiers of Task Force Rifles recently returned from Bosnia following a successful six-month peacekeeping mission, and more Mississippi soldiers are now preparing for their duty in the war-torn Balkan region. We should celebrate the quality and strength of our military forces.

The 4th of July should not only serve as a time of reflection for us, but also as a time to take notice of our direction for the future. As Americans and Mississippians, we have fought for freedom, progress, and success. We will not stop. As we continue our fight for freedom, we must also continue our fight for better schools, better jobs, and better health care. Persistence, vigilance, and hard work are the keys to winning the battle for improving the quality of life for all Mississippians and Americans.

Our nation's independence should be a celebration of the life, liberty and pursuit of happiness ingrained by our Founding Fathers. We can take pride in our nation as a true melting pot of people, ideas, and cultures that hold sacred the core principles of America. America is not merely the land in which we live and work. America is set of ideals. America is a set of principles— these ideals and principles that define who we are remain strong today and into tomorrow.

Happy Birthday America and God Bless!!!