

Governor Ronnie Musgrove's First Year in Office

2000 Accomplishments

Education

- 1) Raising teacher pay in Mississippi to the Southeastern average was a milestone in our goal to become number one in education. House Bill 1134, signed 5-1-00, established a teacher pay raise plan that will meet the Southeastern average. This bill also includes incentive grants for improving schools and accountability plan for low-performing schools.
- 2) The *Classroom Technology Task Force* was established 3-8-00, with the goal of placing an Internet-accessible computer in every elementary and secondary public school classroom by the end of 2002. This effort is bringing Mississippi one step closer to becoming a leader in the world of education across the nation. We are working with MCI WorldCom to bring Broadband Internet access to every rural community in Mississippi, and we are bringing the educational tools our students need to prepare them for the workforce.
- 3) We launched a new website to help our children prepare for a bright future in Mississippi. FastForward Mississippi (www.fastforwardms.com) guides kindergarten through college students on the career path of their choice. It serves as a teaching aid and helps parents and counselors talk to their students about the educational choices they make to start them down the pathway of a successful career.

Health Care

- 1) Health care for Mississippi's children is more readily available since the start of 2000. In May 2000, we unveiled a new plan of action to promote the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). The Governor's Office has partnered with the Department of Human Services, the Division of Medicaid, the Department of Finance and Administration and others to develop new and innovative ways to reach more Mississippi children of working families in need of health insurance. More than 18,000 additional Mississippi children have access to healthcare, an increase of 36 times the number covered when the Governor took office.
- 2) Primary Care providers are becoming more and more scarce across our state. We must act now if we are to stop this exodus. House Bill 729 was publicly signed on 5-2-00 and establishes a *Medical Education Scholarship Program* that will provide up to 20 new recipients each year with a full scholarship to obtain a medical education at the University of Mississippi School of Medicine. Once a scholarship recipient has completed their residency, they agree to practice family medicine for at least 10 years in an area of the state that is designated a critical needs area.

- 3) The Physicians Assistants House Bill 846 was signed on 4-24-00 and provides for licensure and regulation of physician assistants. Having Physicians Assistants available throughout Mississippi will offer our people increased access to medical care.

Public Safety

- 1) We are taking a firm commitment to promoting public safety. House Bill 642, signed 4-18-00, revises schedules II, III and IV for controlled substances. Senate Bill 2442, signed 4-19-00, enhances the penalty for methamphetamine precursor violation when in possession of a weapon.
- 2) The Military Department has worked diligently to strengthen our Guard and prepare them to serve and protect our nation. We are now experiencing stabilization in the number of men and women in the Mississippi Military rather than a decrease that has been occurring throughout the last few years. It takes a special dedication to be one of these soldiers, and we proudly salute them for their efforts.
- 3) For the first time in fifteen years, the State of Mississippi's Department of Corrections is in compliance with prison overcrowding. In less than a three-month period of time, Commissioner Johnson brought prison overcrowding into compliance for the State of Mississippi, and has now developed a long-term solution to prison overcrowding in our state.
- 4) The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency is working with local officials across the state to ensure that our counties have local emergency management officials working to assist communities in preparation for disasters. Under the direction of Robert Latham, ten new local emergency management offices have been established since January of 2000.
- 5) The Mississippi Department of Public Safety launched a web site to give people access to information regarding the whereabouts of individuals who have been convicted of sex crimes in Mississippi. The web site address is www.sor.mdps.state.ms.us.
- 6) The Bureau of Narcotics is working hand-in-hand with local law enforcement agencies to more effectively fight drugs on our streets and in our neighborhoods. By developing these partnerships the Bureau is fighting drug usage and trafficking more effectively and efficiently.

Economic Development

- 1) Workforce training is a key element to a successful economic development program. Approval of Senate Bill 2639 on 4-17-00 developed an employer training program tax credit certified by the State Board for Community/Junior Colleges.
- 2) On September 5, 2000 Mississippi embraced a bold new economic development plan. A special session of the State Legislature overwhelmingly approved The Advantage Mississippi Initiative, which allows us to become more competitive for high-paying jobs with other states. The incentives in the package, along with the administrative changes, are attracting companies around the world to do business with Mississippi.
- 3) Nissan announced plans to build a new manufacturing plant in Canton, Mississippi. The plant will provide 4,000 new direct jobs for the people of Mississippi. Nissan's decision to locate their new plant in Mississippi is further recognition that we have the quality workforce, workforce training programs and commitment to business growth that it takes to be competitive and successful. We are investing in more jobs, high-paying jobs and a better quality of life for our people.

E-Government

- 1) Beginning this year, Mississippians will see changes in the way they conduct government business. With the frequency of our use of computers, it is time for Mississippians to be able to easily access Mississippi government services. E-Government will offer more accessible government services to the people of Mississippi.

Miscellaneous

- 1) The creation of the Statewide Mentoring Initiative through the Office of the Governor will recruit mentors, create public awareness of mentoring, serve as a resource and assistance for local mentoring partnerships, strengthen the state's investment in mentoring, provide training, collect data and analyze the impact of the initiative on students' educational improvements.
- 2) One-On-One With The Governor provides the opportunity for all Mississippians to spend time visiting one-on-one with the Governor to share with him their ideas, concerns or issues. In addition to the One-On-One sessions in Jackson, the Governor went on the road to visit with Mississippians in Hernando, Tupelo and Greenville during the month of November, and will travel to Meridian and the Gulf Coast during the month of December.

- 3) On May 4, 2000 the Mississippi Supreme Court ruled that Mississippi did not have an official state flag and coat of arms because the Legislature did not bring the laws pertaining to these symbols forward in the 1906 codification. Rather than allowing the issue to flounder, we took action immediately. Within 24 hours of the Mississippi Supreme Court ruling we created the Advisory Commission on the State Flag and the Coat of Arms to gather facts, obtain citizens' input and advise the Legislature as to a recommended course of action based upon their findings. The Commission makes their recommendation to the Legislature seven months after their formation. We need a swift resolution to this issue so that we can move forward with the business of creating the opportunity of a good quality of life for our people in Mississippi.