

Question 1

Please explain the major provisions of the Advantage Mississippi Initiative. What are the rationales behind them, and why were they passed?

Answer: Name Change
ACE Fund
Regional Economic Development Act
Mississippi Advantage Jobs Act
Growth & Prosperity Act
Jobs Tax Credit Amendments
Basic Skills Training Tax Credit
Major Impact Act
Industrial Sales Tax Exemptions
Agriculture Industry Growth for Agribusiness
Mississippi Land, Water & Timber Resources Act
Small Municipalities & Limited Population Counties
Disparity Study
Annual Report

Question 2

Can you share some recent success stories of significant high-tech, high-wage employers who have announced major expansions in Mississippi?

Answer: Service Zone is locating a customer center in Starkville that will ultimately employ up to 600 people. All positions will require a high degree of computer knowledge and proficiency.

Howard Industries is building computers in Laurel.
Convergys Corp. is opening a new 700-employee call center in Hattiesburg.

Hartford Technologies is opening a new zinc oxide processing facility in Batesville.

Viking Range in Greenwood uses highly sophisticated manufacturing processes throughout its manufacturing facilities and is in a continuous growth mode.

Question 3

Given that MS is a well-know hub for the global telecommunications business, how is your state leveraging this advantage to recruit even more like-minded industry?

Answer: Many of the initiatives included in the Advantage Mississippi program address attracting companies that provide high wage, quality jobs which would include the telecommunications industry. Not only will we be trying to attract additional companies in this field, but also companies in other clusters that already exist in MS. We will use a cluster approach to target industries that fit best for MS's future. This strategy allows us to capitalize on knowledge driven innovations and research and development capabilities. Along with that, we will work to help existing business and industry reposition to become more productive and competitive in order to leapfrog into the new economy. We have to pick the industries we want and target particular clusters in which to foster growth, entrepreneurship and technological capacity.

Question 4

What role will the state's colleges and universities play in your new economic development program?

Answer: Education is a key component of this plan and a major goal of this administration. The higher education institutions will play a major role in assisting us with our economic development efforts. Our universities and their research capabilities will be central to success with the cluster strategy. MS will take advantage of the economic development opportunities presented by our well-regarded research-based institutions of higher learning. Our state's comprehensive system of higher education can be enhanced to help further build upon our state's technological and intellectual capacity. This will be central to MS's ability to keep our best and brightest here in our state – pursuing careers, opportunity and innovations. We will bring to life the technological and scientific advances being conceived and created at our universities (biosciences, engineering, supercomputing, polymers.) MS universities are covering major ground in these areas. We plan to aggressively pursue options for commercializing technology and enhancing research alliances among the Institutions of Higher Learning as well as private industry.

Question 5

High-tech firms generally prefer to cluster around like industries. What is your state doing to provide such opportunities?

Answer: Much of this was discussed in regard to taking a “cluster” approach to targeting economic development. In addition, we have passed legislation that will regard companies transferring its national or regional headquarters to the state. And, companies can receive \$1000 credit per job for new research and development

jobs. Other measures include allowing retraining as an expense and other items that are important to high-tech industries.

Question 6

How would a large corporate real estate user benefit – both tangibly and intangibly – from Advantage MS Initiatives?

Answer: Any existing industry or new industry will benefit from this initiative. The MS Advantage Jobs act allows companies to receive up to 4% cash back on payroll if they provide an annual salary, jobs tax credits, basic skills training tax credits, and if they locate in certain areas, they would virtually in tax-free zones. Companies benefit intangibly by having located in these communities where they will be paying higher wages and therefore, improving the overall quality of life for the people of the community. An enormous amount of goodwill should occur as a result of this location or expansion.

Question 7

What is the most significant corporate real estate project taking place right now in MS?

Answer: The new Lockheed Martin Advanced Propulsion, Thermal and Metrology facility at Stennis Space Center in Hancock County. The site was selected because of its secure, remote location on a federally owned facility with buffer areas and limited access. The project was implemented through a consortium consisting of the US Government-NASA (the landowner), the State of MS (will build the building and lease it back to the company), Hancock County (tax

incentives and financial contributions), and a major division in Lockheed Martin (the equipment and technological processes owner).
Financial incentives were the largest single factor in site selection decision.

Question 8

What are the principal economic development challenges being faced by your state right now? Is it labor, education, availability of water resources, transportation infrastructure or some other issue? What steps are being taken by government and industry leaders to address these challenges?

Answer: MS made a giant leap in transportation over the last few years, but we must work even more closely to align economic development with transportation. By setting priorities and re-evaluating how we approach transportations systems as a whole – air, rail, road, port and intermodal development in MS, we will build our capacity, link our resources and create jobs. We will create an inclusive task force of state agency representatives, local officials and civic leaders, and will spearhead the crafting of a long-term plan for installing, repairing or upgrading water systems across the state. Working together through a state-local-private partnership, MS can maximize available state and federal resources dedicated for this purpose.

Question 9

How has the advent of the gaming industry along MS's Gulf Coast affected your economy?

Answer: MS has three separate casino gambling markets, the Gulf Coast, the North River Region (Tunica County),

and the South River Region (Adams, Washington & Warren counties). The impact of gambling has been quite dramatic statewide. In 1992, Tunica had one motel with a total of 20 rooms. Today Tunica has more than 6,000 rooms with more under construction.