

A Campaign Promise Comes to Life

Raising teacher pay to the Southeastern average was one of the most important issues facing the people of Mississippi. While campaigning for Governor and throughout the 2000 Legislative session it was one of my top priorities. It is now becoming a reality.

Our children deserve the best teachers and the best teaching resources available, and it is our responsibility to make them available. If we are to provide our children with the educational tools and opportunities they deserve and demand, then paying competitive salaries for our teachers is essential. We must keep good teachers in the classroom, and we must be able to recruit students to the teaching profession. For Mississippi to do this, we must pay competitive salaries.

When we submitted our recommendations to the Legislative Budget Committee, they were pro-education. We recommended teacher pay raises, fully funding the adequate education program and scholarship funds for teachers. We have shared our priorities for funding to the Legislative Budget Committee, and we have given them a plan of action to implement the budget.

We were disciplined in forming our budget, focusing on the greatest areas of need in our state. Our priorities for the budget are ensuring quality education for our children, addressing health care needs and promoting public safety. We will provide our teachers with much deserved raises.

A raise in teacher salaries will in turn lead to even better education for our children. As we recruit more quality teachers to the state and to stay in the state, our children's education and training will improve. In order for Mississippi to be competitive with other states when it comes to business and industry, we must have a workforce that is superiorly educated. Our children today are the workforce of tomorrow.

Industries looking to locate to Mississippi will evaluate our educational system. Mississippi's educational system must be able to provide an educated workforce and be able to continually train their workforce. We have initiated a plan to do just that.

It will take more than raising teacher pay in Mississippi, and we have other plans in motion. We plan to place an Internet-accessible computer in every Mississippi classroom by 2002. In our global society, our children must have access to the Internet. They must keep up with today's technology and be able to "work" the web. When we accomplish this goal, Mississippi will be at the top of the list and on schedule to be the first state in the nation with an Internet-accessible computer in every classroom.

Mississippi is finding itself in the spotlight of the nation and the world as people take notice of the accomplishments we have made for the people of the State of Mississippi. Our teacher pay raise plan is a bold step for the people of Mississippi. We are committed to education in Mississippi, and we are showing that commitment to the people of our state, the people of our nation and the people of the world.