

June 13, 2001

TO: Governor Musgrove
FROM: John Sewell
RE: Possible Q & A for Boys State
CC: Lisa Mader

FYI: Several other state officials have spoken (or will be speaking) to Boys State this week, among them Eric Clark, Robert Johnson, Mike Moore, Amy Tuck, Marshall Bennett, and Phil Bryant.

Teacher pay:

During the 2001 legislative session, we worked hard to raise the salaries of our public school teachers. We need to provide competitive salaries if we are going to recruit and retain the best teachers for our classrooms.

In the end, the Legislature gave our teachers a one-year bonus, but took away funds for them to purchase supplies for their classrooms.

The Legislature wanted to base any teacher pay increases on revenue growth of at least 5 percent, a number that I knew was far too optimistic. I met with the Federal Reserve Chairman, Alan Greenspan, earlier in the year – and he was confident in his projections of a sluggish economy. I told the Legislature what he told me, and they wouldn't listen. Now, we're seeing the results.

Tax collections for May were down \$43 million. We will begin the next fiscal year in the hole. I am confident the economy will turn around within the next year, but until then we cannot spend money we don't have. Raising taxes is not the answer; controlling our spending is.

The state flag:

The people of Mississippi had an opportunity to go to the polls and cast their vote on the flag issue. The people made their preference known, and we should respect that preference.

DHS / Janice Broome Brooks:

I selected Ms. Brooks for the position of executive director at the Department of Human Services because I had faith in her ability to provide the necessary leadership over there. That faith is just as strong today.

She should be allowed to do the job she was asked to do. The Legislature confirmed her for this position. It is important for her to have the ability to do the job without interference in the day-to-day operations.

Furniture issue:

The Legislature appropriated money for new furnishings in the Woolfolk Building prior to my being elected. Due to the late date in taking office, a short transition period, and two special sessions of the Legislature, we were pressed for time in getting the furniture ordered – that is why we needed to get permission to order the furniture quickly.

The amount spent on the furniture amounted to less than 2 percent of the total appropriation for furnishings as decided by the Legislature. We did not spend any extra money on furniture.