

*Remarks for the
AARP Mississippi Day at the Capitol
March 18, 2003*

- Recognize Mattie Stevens and Walter Howell
 - Want to start by thanking you for commitment / dedication to making a difference for MS

- I have enjoyed meeting with you and working with you on your legislative issues
 - My door will continue to be open.

- As you know, it is more important than ever to set priorities and stick to them
 - That's what we've been doing in MS

■ Impact of national recession

- More than \$7 trillion lost in stock market
- More than two million Americans out of work
- States cutting school week / releasing prisoners / massive lay-offs

■ Effects of national recession touches everyone

- Recession has no respect for political parties
- Every state affected

■ Have to deal with the impact here in MS

- Protect people in short term / prepare for long term

■ Best way to do that is through creating jobs and investing in education

○ Everybody benefits from good schools

■ Education must be first priority for MS

○ Making great progress

■ Teacher pay/ 49th to 19th when fully implemented

■ Test scores up/accountability standards stronger than “No Child Left Behind”

■ Princeton Review: MS 6th best testing system in nation

■ MS 6th in nation in National Board Certified Teachers

■ Computers in Classroom

- Keeping education a priority with a budget that puts Schools First / 62 percent

- Earlier I mentioned the national recession / impact on states and how we have to prepare for the long term

- Also want to take a moment to discuss issue of health care
 - As you know, health care has been one of my top priorities during my administration
 - We fought hard for flexibility to run Medicaid program
 - Thanks to Rica Lewis-Payton, Mississippi ranks near the top

- We have to look to the future of MS / where do we want to go?
 - Good schools / good jobs / good communities

- Will Rogers quote: Even if on right track, will get run over if you just sit there
 - MS is on the right track, and we're moving

- Thank you for your help in keeping us moving