

*Remarks for the
American Legion State Convention
July 13, 2003*

- Recognize Bill West, Commander / Johnny Bracy, Adjutant

- Honored to be here with you today
 - Honored to help celebrate the men and women of America's fighting forces who have served, and serve still, in the fight for freedom

- Honored to be here to celebrate our sons and our daughters, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives
 - All those who have answered the call of their country to defend the principles of freedom and justice that we hold dear

- In recent months, we watched soldiers being deployed to the battlefield
 - We watched our citizen soldiers – the men and women of the Mississippi National Guard and Reserves – board buses and airplanes en route to service in places we didn't or couldn't know

- They've been deployed around the world on missions that carry inherent risks
 - Each of you has known those risks
 - Each of you knows this as well –
wherever our soldiers are, they are well-trained for the work ahead, and they'll get the job done

- I have the distinct honor of serving as
commander-in-chief of the Mississippi
National Guard
 - I can't express enough the pride I feel
knowing that our soldiers are serving
their nation
 - One thing I do know – when America
needs their very best, they make the call
to Mississippi

- The events of the past few months have
created a whole new generation of veterans
who have experienced the horrors of combat
 - They responded to a call that was made
on September 11

- They responded to weed out those who would attack the innocent – and then run and hide in a cave

- In times of war, there are those who see a hopeless end; I see an endless hope
 - America is the greatest nation in the history of mankind, and nothing will change that

- America's not just a country
 - It's an ideal, a principle
 - That principle remains strong today and forever – and it remains strong because our sons and our daughters, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, are fighting to protect it

- I pray, as you do, for the safe return of our soldiers from this conflict
 - I pray in thanksgiving for those who have served before them
 - I pray for the wisdom and leadership of our president and those who serve with him
 - And, I pray for peace

- May God bless our state, our nation and our people