Thank you, Andrew, for the work you and ExplorNet are doing here in Mississippi as part of the Computers in the Classroom initiative.

I also want to thank Robin Costa and the Maddox Foundation, the Public Education Forum of the Mississippi Economic Council, and Carolyn Shanks and Entergy for their tremendous support.

Last week, my chief of staff was at a meeting in Knoxville and the subject of computers in schools came up.

One individual from Tennessee commented that all the schools in the state were wired for the Internet. Well, Bill was able to inform them that not only is every *classroom* in Mississippi wired for the Internet, but every classroom is going to have a *computer* to make use of that wiring.

There's a big difference between being wired and being connected – and Mississippi's children are connected.

The Computers in the Classroom initiative is placing an Internet-accessible computer in every public school classroom in the state. This effort has one goal – to help give our students the tools and skills they'll need to compete and succeed in the economy of the 21$^{st}$ century – an economy that will be borderless, wireless and global.

We've talked about being the first state in the nation to place an Internet-accessible computer in every classroom, and a couple of weeks ago the National Governors Association confirmed it.

We're on our way. To quote the policy analyst with the NGA, we're "at the head of the wave of technological innovation."

We're not just putting computers in our classrooms; we're giving our children the keys to a brighter future. We're giving our teachers better tools for teaching.

We're demonstrating to the world that Mississippi means business, that Mississippi's open for business, and we're going to challenge our competition like never before.

Back in March, students from around the state gathered in the Capitol building for a "Computer Blitz Build." With support from ExplorNet Mississippi and a host of corporate sponsors, these students constructed 100 computers for distribution to schools.

It was an amazing sight – these young people actually building computers that will help teach a new generation – and it's a sight we see again here today.

Business and industry don't look at Mississippi like they used to. They see the computers going into classrooms, they see the most aggressive economic development program in the country, and they see a commitment to not giving in without first giving our very best effort.

The best of our work begins with a single program, a single initiative designed to maximize the potential found in our people. The "Computers in the Classroom" initiative is just such a program – and it's capturing the attention of the rest of the nation and the world.

The science fiction author Isaac Asimov once wrote, "I do not fear computers.  I fear the lack of them."  We're working to make sure Mississippi's students do not suffer from a lack of them, and the work is going well.

This is a great program for Mississippi – and I appreciate the hard work being done here. Thank you.