

*Remarks for the
Children's Day of Hope Press Conference
November 13, 2002*

What a great morning! Thank you to the Powell Middle School Band for their great talent and music, and thank you to all the other kids here with us today.

I want you all to take a good, long look at these kids here this morning – each and every one of them represents the promise and the potential of this state. I'm as proud of them as I can be – and I want them to know we love them, we're working for them, and we're excited about what they are going to do with their lives.

This commitment we have to our children is found in the strength of its foundation, a foundation rooted in our homes and in our schools.

We know our children have the talents, the gifts and the skills to succeed – we just have to help them make the most of them. We're raising teacher pay from 49th to 19th in the nation. We're focusing on sending our children to school ready to learn, and having the tools in place at school to help them learn.

We're putting an Internet-accessible computer in every public school classroom in the state, the first state in the nation to do so. Some other states have their schools wired for the Net, but we have all our classrooms connected to the Net.

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

We're giving our teachers and our children the tools to build a successful future, but there are places where only a parent can fit the needs of a child.

That's why we're here today, to talk about the importance of our children having a home for shelter and parents for guidance. More than 3,000 kids in Mississippi don't live with their birth families, and they need stability in their lives.

Most of them have special needs. Most of them have not had the stability they need in their lives. All of them deserve our love and our attention.

I've issued a proclamation about this issue, and I would like to ask Sebastian Beck to come forward and read it for us now.

(child reads proclamation)

I want every day to be a day of hope for Mississippi's children. I want every one of these kids standing in this capitol rotunda to know that we support them and care about them.

Our future is surrounding us right now. Our future is in the bright eyes and the bright minds of these children.

November 24th will mark the official “Children’s Day of Hope” in Mississippi. Let’s remember to make the other 364 days hopeful ones. Thank you.