

*Remarks for
East Side High School Graduation
May 23, 2003*

- Recognize Principal Dwight Lockett

- This is an important day for all of you
 - Culmination of a lot of work, study, and hopefully, some fun
 - Some of you may be headed off to college, community college or down another path

- Whatever path you take, I urge you to stay focused on opportunities here in Mississippi
 - We're growing like never before
 - Important to keep our best minds – to keep you – here in Mississippi

- It's an exciting time – and I want you to be a part of it
 - Mississippi is changing, and the rest of the world is taking notice.

- Everyone has an image of Mississippi in their mind
 - Each of us here has an image of state
 - People around the country have images of Mississippi as well

- Tonight, want to talk about a new and different image of Mississippi
 - Image of a state moving faster than anyone else into the 21st century
 - Competing in global marketplace
 - Setting new standards in education and job creation

- It's not an easy time to be doing all this

- Every state impacted by national recession
 - More than \$7 trillion lost in stock market
 - More than 2 million Americans out of work
 - States cutting school week / releasing prisoners / massive lay-offs

- Have to protect people in the short term while preparing for the long term
 - Best way to do that is through investing in education and creating jobs
 - Here's where I want to start changing your image of Mississippi

- Many think of us as 48th, 49th, 50th in education
 - That's no longer true
 - Education is our first priority / has been for past three years since I've been in office
 - Public schools are cornerstones of our communities and key to the success of our economy

- Mississippi is a recognized leader in education
 - Teacher pay / 49th to 19th when fully implemented
 - Princeton Review: 12th best testing system in nation
 - Leading other states in preparedness for "No Child Left Behind" / USA Today article

- One of the most exciting successes in education is in technology
 - Every public school classroom in the state has Internet-accessible computer
 - Mississippi first state in the nation to achieve this goal / confirmed by NGA

- Other states are also watching what we've done with our investment in education
 - In my State of the State address, challenged Legislature to invest in education at 62% of budget, and fund it first
 - They rose to the challenge, and I signed legislation within next 3 weeks

- We're proving to the people of Mississippi, and the rest of the nation, that we're serious about education
 - Making the investment now for dividends tomorrow

- When it comes to education, we mean business
 - Business means jobs
 - Jobs are opportunities for you

- Mississippi no longer depends solely on agriculture / low wage jobs
 - Aggressive about creating quality, high-paying jobs for our people

- Growth over last three years
 - 2,200 new and expanded facilities
 - More than 53,000 new jobs
 - Total business investment in Mississippi nearly \$15 billion

- Putting people to work in highly skilled jobs with good pay
 - Nissan opens next Tuesday / only auto plant opening in America this year
 - \$1.5 billion investment by Nissan / 5,300 direct jobs
 - 26,000 jobs through suppliers and support industries

- Gained attention of companies around the world when we landed Nissan
 - Now more than ever, Mississippi is being visited by companies

- They're coming to Mississippi because the word is out about what we can do
 - Site Selection magazine: Mississippi ranked as Top 10 location for new companies
 - One of top 10 states for small business survival
 - Expansion magazine: 4 Mississippi cities ranked in latest survey of 50 hottest American cities for expansion or location of facilities

- When businesses read these industry publications, they see that Mississippi has something to offer
 - They realize the image has changed

- We're looking to the future of MS / where do we want to go?
 - Good schools / good jobs / good communities

- The image of the Mississippi of 2003 is unlike anything anyone could have imagined
 - It's an image of people working in highly-skilled, well-paying jobs
 - It's an image of children in classrooms equipped with the technology to bring the world to their desk

- It's an image of global companies looking for a place to do business in the state

- We're making a difference in Mississippi
 - I want you to help be a part of that effort

- Will Rogers once commented that “even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there.”
 - Mississippi's on the right track – and you're right there with us

- I know you all believe the testing is over for now – at least for the summer – but it's not
 - Want to give you one last test here today
 - Simple test with no essay questions and no grade
 - Simple test to help us stop and think about what's important in life

- I'm going to ask a few questions, and I want you to think about the answers
 - You can grade yourself if you like...
 - Name the five wealthiest people in the world
 - Name the last five Heisman winners
 - Name the last five winners of the Miss America contest
 - Name the last five Academy Award winners for best actor and best actress

- How did you do?
 - Point is, none of us remember headliners of yesterday
 - They may be the best in their fields, but...
 - Applause dies
 - Awards tarnish
 - We may have a new list of the wealthiest people tomorrow

- One more test for – see you how you do on this one
 - Think of people in your life who have made you feel appreciated and special
 - Think of teachers who aided your journey through school
 - Name your first-grade teacher

- Easier? Simple lesson is that people who make the greatest difference in life are not the ones with most money, the most awards or the flashiest lifestyle
 - It's people who care, who nurture, who work to help make a difference

- Opportunity belongs to you to forget excuses and focus on solutions
 - Take calculated risks when the rewards are great.

- It's been said that “we tend to overestimate what we can do in one year and underestimate what we can do in ten years.”

- Don't underestimate your gifts, your talents, or what you can do with your life
 - Don't underestimate what you can do in Mississippi

- Let's build our future together based on what our future can be
 - It's an exciting, daunting prospect, but you can do it

- Congratulations on your achievements
 - Follow your dreams and help build an exciting future

