

*Remarks for the  
Good Government Kickoff Event  
February 14, 2002*

Thank you, Jack. It's good to be here with you to talk about the role of government, and especially the role you can play in making sure we have good government.

Your greatest impact on government comes at one place – the ballot box. The right to vote is one of the foundations of our government. Your vote at the ballot box is symbolic of your voice being heard; and never let anyone tell you that your vote doesn't matter.

The excuse of not voting because you don't believe it won't make a difference just doesn't wash. The most recent presidential election was a vivid reminder of just how important every single vote is.

We all watched as crowds on both sides of the political aisle gathered in south Florida to protest the votes and lobby for their candidates.

We watched as election commissioners examined individual ballots with magnifying glasses to examine pregnant or hanging chads.

We watched as the process eventually worked its way to the Supreme Court and ended with the inauguration of George Bush.

My own campaign two years ago ended with a very close vote among the people, a vote finally decided in the House of Representatives.

Yes, every vote counts, and a vote not cast is a vote wasted.

It's also important to cast your vote thoughtfully. Know what's going on in your community, in our state, and across the nation. Become involved as much as possible, but at the very least read the newspapers and keep up with current events.

With everything happening these days in state government, from the budget situation to the great work we're doing in economic development, it's important for you to be involved.

In my State of the State address last month, I outlined four main priorities for Mississippi: jobs, health care, education and public safety.

We're committed to the basic health care needs of our people. We're working hard to ensure that our children, our seniors and our disabled have access to the quality health care they need.

At the same time, we have to remain dedicated to you – to the health care professionals who do so much for our friends and our families. You are the ones on the front lines, and no one knows the issues and the challenges better than you.

I want to thank you for the tremendous work you do on a daily basis. Communities across this state benefit from your knowledge and your skills – from the most rural areas to the largest cities.

The needs are out there and you're helping to meet them. From nurses to X-ray technicians to physical therapists to Jack Cleary, you are the ones helping to make a difference. Thank you, too, to the River Oaks' Good Government Group Steering Committee, for the leadership you've shown in organizing this event.

Every employee at this hospital plays a vital role in addressing the health care needs of Mississippi. By the same token, you can play a vital role in building a healthy government.

Abraham Lincoln wrote, “no man is good enough to govern another man without that other’s consent.” We are a government based on the premise that the people are the driving force – that’s the way it’s always been, and always will be.

Thank you for your commitment to good government.