

*Remarks for the
Governor's Luncheon (Japan)
September 19, 2001*

Konnichi wa (good afternoon). It is a pleasure to be here with you today, and I thank you for taking time from your busy schedules for this luncheon. (STOP)

Let me begin by thanking the America Japan Society and the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan for their support of my visit here. I appreciate the role they play in this great country and the marketplace of our two nations. (STOP)

This is a wonderful opportunity today, to visit with you about the state of Mississippi and the role it is playing in the new global economy. (STOP)

Mississippi is not a large state. It is largely rural, with a population of nearly 3 million people. And, as Governor of Mississippi, I am committed to the economic development and growth of our state. (STOP)

We are building a reputation as a model for other states in America when it comes to economic development. For a state with an agricultural history, our efforts to attract industry have been largely successful.

(STOP)

How are we doing this? Last year, a special session of the Mississippi Legislature produced the Advantage Mississippi Initiative. (STOP)

It is one of the most aggressive economic development packages in the nation, and it is already paying off for Mississippi. The greatest evidence of this is the new Nissan plant currently being built just north of the capital city of Jackson. (STOP)

This project was hailed as one of the top economic development projects in the United States last year. We wanted it in Mississippi, and we went after it. (STOP)

Normally, the timeline for locating a plant of this size is about 18 months, from the time of the initial contact to the official announcement of location. (STOP)

We landed the Nissan project in less than five months – and we did it in large part because of the Advantage Mississippi Initiative. (STOP)

This package created a number of new programs and incentives, all designed to help the state retain existing industry and attract new industry. (STOP)

It includes the Advantage Jobs program, which offers incentives for new companies. To qualify, a business must pay an annual salary of 125 percent of the state or county average, provide a health plan, and supply a minimum number of jobs. (STOP)

Eight new regional offices were created to offer better service to industry in rural areas. These offices also play a strong role in bringing new industry to these areas. (STOP)

We established the Mississippi World Trade Center, chartered by the World Trade Center Association, to strengthen our position in the global arena. (STOP)

The State of Mississippi now has offices in Santiago, Chile; London; Singapore; and here in Japan in Yokohama. In fact, Japan was the 9th largest market for Mississippi exports in 2000. (STOP)

As you all well know, today's marketplace is quite different from what it was fifty years ago. Today, we compete in a marketplace that is borderless, wireless and global – and the key word here is “compete.” (STOP)

That's what we're doing in Mississippi. Last year, 195 new business locations were announced in the state. As part of those locations, nearly 12,000 new jobs will be created and more than \$2.5 billion will be invested in the state. (STOP)

The Nissan plant alone represents an investment of \$930 million and the creation of 4,000 jobs. As suppliers are announced, those numbers will continue to grow.

(STOP)

Another important factor in the success of our economic development efforts is our work in education. An educated populace and a skilled workforce play a major role in our ability to attract industry. (STOP)

Two months ago, we passed legislation that will raise the pay for our teachers from 49th in the nation to 19th. In fact, the New York Times wrote an editorial commenting on what Mississippi was able to do with its small population and resources. (STOP)

This is the kind of image I want Mississippi to have – one that lets America and the world see what we really can do. (STOP)

The common images of Mississippi are ones of dusty roads, lazy rivers, cotton fields and blues music. Those are true images, but they are not the only ones. (STOP)

The Mississippi of the 21st century is one which welcomes and supports high-technology industry. It offers a skilled workforce ready to support that new industry. (STOP)

It is the home of MCI WorldCom, Peavey Electronics, the Stennis Space Center and Ingalls Shipbuilding. It is also the home of the newest plant of Nissan North America.

(STOP)

The Mississippi of the 21st century is one in which every public school classroom will have an internet-accessible computer. We are on schedule now to be the first state in the nation to achieve this goal. (STOP)

The Mississippi of the 21st century is doing business in a new way – a way that benefits our people, our partners, and our future.

(STOP)

All of this is part of the commitment I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, the commitment to the growth of our state.

(STOP)

The great American humorist once remarked that “even if you’re on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there.” (STOP)

Mississippi isn't just sitting there any longer. We are up, we are working, we are setting a new standard for business in America. (STOP)

I am proud of the relationship we have with Japan and some of its great businesses, such as Asics, Calsonic, Hitachi Cable, Mazda, Nippon, Sumitomo, Takata, and of course, Nissan. (STOP)

I look forward to building on these relationships and the benefits that will come from them. Thank you for your time today.

