

*Remarks for the
MAE Annual Convention
March 11, 2003*

- Recognize Beverly Sanders
 - Want to start by thanking you for
commitment / dedication to making a
difference for MS

- More important than ever to set priorities
and stick to them
 - That's what we've been doing in MS

■ Impact of national recession

- More than \$7 trillion lost in stock market
- More than two million Americans out of work
- States cutting school week / releasing prisoners / massive lay-offs

■ Effects of national recession touches everyone

- Recession has no respect for political parties
- Every state affected

- Have to deal with the impact here in MS
 - Protect people in short term / prepare for long term

- Best way to do that is through creating jobs and investing in education
 - Everybody benefits from good schools

- Education must be first priority for MS
 - Making great progress
 - Teacher pay
 - Test scores
 - Computers in Classroom

- Keeping education a priority with a budget that puts Schools First / 62 percent
 - *HISTORIC ACTION THAT WAS TAKEN*
 - *UNPRECEDENTED COOPERATION*
 - *WAS A HISTORIC DAY WHEN SIGNED EDUCATION BILLS*

- Budget is key issue of legislative session
 - Must budget based on real numbers, not on hope
 - Funding education at 62%
 - Fully funding MAEP for the first time
 - Funds teacher pay raise

- Earlier I mentioned the national recession / impact on states and how we have to prepare for the long term
 - That's what we're doing here
 - MS is first state in the nation to fund education, and fund it first
 - Others are looking to us now for guidance / leadership
 - That's a good position to be in

- Also want to take a moment to discuss issue of health insurance
 - We've made good progress investing in education / teachers
 - Not going to lose that progress on this issue

- My budget last November anticipated this insurance issue
 - Funded \$18.8 million to cover rise in premium
 - This funding needs to be put in place now

- We have to look to the future of MS / where do we want to go?
 - Good schools / good jobs / good communities

- Have to continue investing in education
 - More computers in classrooms
 - Higher test scores
 - Better funding for higher education

- Will Rogers quote: Even if on right track,
will get run over if you just sit there
 - MS is on the right track, and we're
moving

- Thank you for your help in keeping us
moving