

*Remarks to the
Mississippi Development Authority-Quail Hunt
February 11, 2003*

As Governor, it is my sincere pleasure to welcome you to our state.

If this is your *first visit* and first quail hunt with us, then we hope you will have the opportunity to learn more about the unique assets Mississippi offers for new business locations.

If this is a *return trip* for you to Mississippi, then we know you'll be visiting with old friends you met during your last trip here.

We're pleased you're here to share in the camaraderie this quail hunt offers.

Quail hunting is pure economic development. You shake the bush to see what you can stir up, and ultimately land in the bag. But, in the process, you learn that building relationships is actually what helps put deals together.

Some of you in this room know Mississippi well. As a result of your efforts, we've announced some new projects together and created new jobs. Without you, the state would be far less prepared to meet the needs of businesses today.

In 2000, shortly after I became Governor, I made economic development a priority and began creating a new blueprint for economic development, the Advantage Mississippi Initiative. This new program combines a number of incentives and services designed to enhance Mississippi's opportunity to compete in the global marketplace.

Once we signed the Advantage Mississippi program into law, two short months later, we landed the Nissan project by working with site selection consultants and corporate officials. *(Ed McCallum of McCallum-Sweeny was the site selection firm that brought the Nissan deal to us. Ed should be in attendance at this event and could be recognized.)*

Since that time, Mississippi has been on the radar screen of other major automotive companies, numerous manufacturers and service providers, and site selection consultants worldwide.

In the midst of a national recession where the stock market has lost \$7 trillion and over two million Americans have lost their jobs, we have created over 49,000 jobs. More than 23,000 of those jobs were through the expansion of existing industries while, over \$13.5 billion has been invested in new and expanded businesses.

During my State of the State address, I proposed the MS Rural Economic Impact Authority. This authority will issue \$20 million in bonds to help with economic development in rural areas. Funding from this program will also cover workforce training at community and junior colleges.

In Mississippi, we've made bold, decisive moves to improve our business climate and to meet the needs of business.

Mississippi has a comprehensive plan for education. Teacher pay has been raised from 49th to 19th in the nation, test scores are up and we have internet-accessible computers in every classroom.

Princeton Review recently rated Mississippi's testing program as the 6th best in the nation.

According to the Southern Regional Education Board, 62% of our high school graduates are continuing on to college. That ranks MS in the top ten in the nation.

The National Governor's Association has just certified that MS is the first state in the nation to put internet-accessible computers in every classroom in the state.

During my State of the State address, I challenged the legislature to fully fund education and to fund it early.

Mississippi has now made education a priority with a budget that puts schools first. Just last week, I signed into law two bills that fund education at 62% of the general budget. Other states across the nation are cutting education while Mississippi is fully funding education.

When it comes to education in MS, we mean business and business means jobs.

Remember, good schools mean good jobs, and good jobs mean good communities.

Will Rogers said, “Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there.” MS is on the right track and we are moving.

We are proud to be your partners and proud to have you as our visitors at this event tonight. Again, thank you for your participation here, and for keeping Mississippi in mind during your next corporate location search.