

*Remarks for the
Medical Malpractice Reform Press Conference
October 8, 2002*

Good morning. Earlier this year, I spoke of the growing health care crisis in Mississippi and the need for reforms to address it. Over the summer, a joint legislative committee met around the state to gather information on the issue.

On September 5, I called the Legislature into a special session to consider medical malpractice reforms.

I have said all along that I would sign a bill when it came to my desk – and today, I’m going to do it.

To the members of the Legislature and their leadership – thank you for the work you have done during this session. I realize it has not been easy, but the results are worth it.

The process that brought us to this moment today was long, it was frustrating, and it was ugly. But, that is the legislative process – and it works. The end result of this long special session was a piece of legislation that offers a foundation for better health care in Mississippi.

There is still more that can be done to build on this foundation. I offered a proposal to create an insurance pool – or more accurately, a compensation fund – to help further address the affordability and availability of medical malpractice insurance.

I look forward to working with Commissioner Dale and legislators to make this compensation fund a reality – and offer even greater relief to the health care issues facing the people of our state.

There was a challenge before us, and that challenge has been overcome. I'm proud to sign House Bill 2 and move forward in improving health care for the people of our state.

At the same time, I am also today expanding the call of this session, as promised, to include the consideration of general civil justice reform. I urge the Legislature to take up this call and the surrounding issues with the same diligence they applied to medical malpractice reform.

This is a great day for Mississippi. We are sending a message to the rest of the country, and it's a message that echoes loud and clear – Mississippi is a good place to practice medicine, it's people have access to quality health care, and it's a good place to live.

(take seat at table, sign bill, then return to podium – open floor to questions)

NOTE: The first pen you use has been requested by the Mississippi State Medical Association for framing and placement in their boardroom.