

Language for Dr. Richard Thompson's Monday Memo to School Districts

Recent mandatory reductions to education funding are a reflection of what happens when a budget is based on overly optimistic revenue estimates during a national recession. Revenues received for Fiscal Year 2002 through January fell below 98% of the Legislative Budget Office general fund estimate at the date of sine die adjournment. As a result, state law required Governor Musgrove to direct the Department of Finance and Administration to reduce budgets in an amount necessary to keep expenditures within the sum of actual general fund receipts. Last week's mandatory reductions to education totaled approximately \$65 million, in addition to the approximately \$5 million in cuts made to K-12 education in November.

Governor Musgrove's FY 2003 Executive Budget Recommendation funds education as a priority. The Governor's FY03 budget is based on a realistic growth rate of 2.65% and a -2.2% growth rate for FY 02. By using real numbers, cuts will not be made. The Legislature's FY 03 budget is based on a 4.3% growth rate and a .7% growth rate for FY 02. The Governor recommends \$1,583,127,037 in General Funds for K-12, a 12% increase in General Funds over the FY 02 estimate. This is \$55,647,086 more in General Funds than the FY 03 Legislative Budget Recommendation.

The Governor's FY 03 Executive Budget maintains the FY 02 funding level of the Mississippi Adequate Education Program, includes \$70 million for the teacher pay raise, and restores the \$30.5 million in textbook and classroom supply funds diverted by the Legislature during the 2002 Regular Session for the support of FY 02 educational programs.

We simply cannot afford to continue building budgets on false hopes instead of real numbers. False hopes don't fund education in Mississippi, but they make reductions to programs statewide painful and unnecessary. The Legislature is working on the budget for next year. Please contact your representatives in the Legislature and call on them to craft a budget that funds education as a priority for Mississippi.