

## Memo

To: Mark Musick, SREB  
From: Kelly Riley, Policy Liaison  
Date: February 10, 2003  
Subject: *Schools First* Information and Background

I am enclosing information relevant to Governor Musgrove's education funding priority, which we refer to as *Schools First*. The enclosed materials include the Governor's budget proposal and information from his State of the State address, as well as press releases regarding his budget, his State of the State and his signing of the bill this past Wednesday.

As you know, education has long been Governor Musgrove's priority. The signing of the education appropriation bills is the culmination of many months work. The Governor initiated meetings with professional associations (i.e., superintendents, teachers, etc.) last summer. He requested Mississippi's State Superintendent, Executive Director of the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges, and Commissioner of Higher Education to submit budget requests last August based on educational needs rather than anticipated decreased appropriations due to shortfalls in the economy.

Governor Musgrove released his FY 04 executive budget recommendation on November 14, 2002. In preparing his budget recommendations, the Governor funded education first and then funded other agencies with remaining revenues. Governor Musgrove's recommendations funded education at a level of \$2.4 billion, or 62% of the budget. Governor Musgrove called on the Legislature during this State of the State address to appropriate pre-kindergarten through higher education in one comprehensive bill at 62% of the general fund and to send the appropriation bill to his desk for his signature during the first month of the legislative session, rather than during the last two weeks as has been tradition.

Governor Musgrove met with key legislators to discuss the necessity of funding education first. Members of our staff provided assistance to legislators during the drafting of the appropriation bills, as well as throughout the legislative process, including conference negotiations.

Following his State of the State address, the Governor visited schools, community colleges and universities through out Mississippi for two weeks. The Governor also held town hall meetings with both educators and the public to discuss the importance of funding education first.

The Legislature passed the education appropriation bills on January 31, 2003, and Governor Musgrove signed them on February 5, 2003. Funding education first builds on our successes and prioritizes our investment in the future.