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*Schools First* Excerpt from the

**STATE OF THE STATE**

**Governor Ronnie Musgrove**

**January 9, 2003**

“My budget invests 62 percent of the general fund in education. This enhances our future; anything less shortchanges it. I'm fighting to increase funding for education, and the people of Mississippi need you to join the fight with me. The beaten path is not always the best. The status quo is simply not good enough.

I am calling on you to appropriate pre-kindergarten through higher education in one comprehensive bill, and at 62 percent of the general fund. Pass it, put it on my desk and I'll sign it - and I don't mean the last week of March, I mean the third week of January.

Let's prove to the people of Mississippi we care about our schools. Let's prove to them that when it comes to education, we mean business - and business means jobs.

Late last month, I was with a kindergarten class at Casey Elementary School, a National Blue Ribbon school here in Jackson. The children in the class gave me a book containing letters they had written.

One letter from a young girl reminded me again of the reason why we work so hard for their future. Her simple message was "thank you for helping us learn."

For her and for all young people across our state, we must make the necessary investments. If we shortchange our investment in education, we shortchange her future – our future – and that's not an alternative I'm willing to accept.”