

Mississippi's Educational Accomplishments Under the Leadership of Governor Ronnie Musgrove

Since his first election to public office as a state senator in 1987, Governor Ronnie Musgrove has worked tirelessly to improve education in Mississippi.

In the first year of his administration as governor, Musgrove began an initiative known as "Computers in the Classroom," with a mission of placing of an Internet-accessible computer in every public school classroom in the state. The National Governors Association has confirmed that Mississippi is the first state in the nation to accomplish this. According to the NGA, Mississippi is "at the head of the wave of technological innovations."

Musgrove also led the way in the passage of an ambitious teacher pay raise package which, when fully implemented, will raise the average teacher salary for Mississippi from 49th to 19th in the nation. The day after Musgrove signed the legislation, the New York Times commented in an editorial that Mississippi had put together the kind of package that continued to elude New York.

Mississippi was the first state selected by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges to host a Leadership Summit on Higher Education. Governor Musgrove chaired the steering committee that produced a report of six priorities for education in Mississippi, ranging from early childhood education to adult learning.

As a member of the National Governors Association Executive Committee, Musgrove was one of two governors chosen to lead the NGA effort regarding the "No Child Left Behind" legislation recently passed by Congress. Mississippi is also one of six states to participate in Following the Leaders, a pilot program on the implementation of the mandates of the new act. In selecting Mississippi for this program, it was said that Mississippi had "an infectious enthusiasm and commitment to students."

In preparation for the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Nation's Governors adopted policy with the Chief State School Officers taking a strong stand in support of quality education for all students including students with disabilities. Governor Musgrove co-chaired this joint working group.

Mississippi's accountability system has been ranked nationally as one of the strongest systems in the country. A 2002 report of the *Princeton Review* ranked states based on testing programs for the schools, and Mississippi was ranked sixth in the nation. In addition, a January 29, 2003, *USA Today* article which discussed states' compliance with the requirements of No Child Left Behind, stated "of the 40 federal requirements examined by ECS (Education Commission of the States), 12 states are close to fulfilling half or more. Among the furthest along: Mississippi, Tennessee and Texas..."

Because of Governor Musgrove's leadership, education was fully funded for FY 2004 during the first month of the 2003 legislative session, was funded before other agencies' budgets, and was funded at 62% of the state budget.

Musgrove is chairman of the Southern Regional Education Board and is a member of the National Assessment Governing Board and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

With the growth of Mississippi during a sluggish national economy, creating jobs has become a trademark of the Musgrove administration, but the education of Mississippi's children remains his personal passion.