

*Remarks for the
Mississippi Tourism Association "Day at the Capitol"
March 27, 2003*

■ Recognize Fred Ruder / Bob Rohrlack /

Darienne Wilson

■ Also want to recognize:

- Beth Carriere (ca-REER), incoming
President of MTA
- Beau Whittington, MTA Legislative
Chairman
- Kathy Boutwell, MTA Executive
Director
- Donna Mabus, MTA Lobbyist
- Host of other tourism officials here
today

This is an exciting year for tourism in Mississippi.

Our tourism industry is booming. From Vegas-style casinos to charming resorts, from gourmet restaurants to distinct down-home cooking, and from our rich Delta soil to our endless sandy beaches, Mississippi has it all.

Our tourism revenue is up. Many of you know that for Fiscal Year 2002, we had a total of \$6.4 billion in statewide tourism and recreation revenue, and over 35 million visitors traveled to the Hospitality State. That's great news. That's development. That's progress.

Tourism is also more than just about resorts and restaurants – it's about presenting a vision of Mississippi to the rest of the nation and the world that our state is much more than people think. We are a leader in education; we are competing – and winning – in the global marketplace; we are setting new standards for others to follow.

Tourism allows us the opportunity to unite together as a state, and today is proof of the continued cooperative effort between the public and private sector to promote our tourism industry.

Tourism is Mississippi's second largest industry, and I'm happy to support the efforts of those involved – from Corinth and Tunica to Natchez and the Gulf Coast and all the communities in between. Working together, we will continue to seize opportunities that will benefit our entire state. We are committed to growth in Mississippi, and tourism helps us achieve that.

I appreciate all that you are doing to tell the world about Mississippi. What you do helps create jobs for our people and attract new industry to the state. This makes the state a better place for all of our citizens. I want to thank you for that. Keep up the good work!