

*Remarks for the  
Neshoba County Fair  
August 1, 2002*

It is great to be here at the Neshoba County Fair! This event means so much to our state and our people – it's a time for us to gather on the porches and under the trees, to visit with old friends and make new ones, to eat great food and swap stories.

I want to tell you a story today. It's a story of all the good things about Mississippi – our towns and cities, our literature and music, our hospitality and our natural resources. But of all the good things about Mississippi, one stands out above all else – and I'm looking at it right now.

It's each and every one of you – the people of this great state, the people who live in the towns, who write the literature and music, who keep the hospitality alive. And let me say, it is an honor to work for you.

You're what makes Mississippi special.

And, you take care of Mississippi; that's why Mississippi works to take care of you. Whether it's access to quality health care, getting the best education possible, or making sure the streets are safe, you deserve the best.

## **JOBS**

And you also deserve our very best efforts when it comes to building the foundation for a good life – a foundation built on the ability to provide for yourself and your families – a foundation built on good jobs.

I'm proud of what's happening in Mississippi right now. In the face of a national recession, we're building Mississippi. We're building it by bringing in new companies and expanding existing ones. We can't affect what happens on Wall Street in New York, but the work we're doing has a positive effect on Main Street in Mississippi.

I'm proud of the fact that nearly 36,000 new jobs that have been created in the past two years, and that 17,000 of them have been through the expansion of existing businesses. The latest figures from the Mississippi Development Authority show that, just from the beginning of this year, 133 businesses have announced expansions that will generate over 4,500 new jobs.

I'm not just the governor; I'm the chief salesman for the state of Mississippi. That's an exciting role, and one I take on eagerly. Like I said before, I'm proud to talk about you and what we're doing here – and believe me, people around the world are watching and listening to what we do.

They've been listening halfway around the world in Japan at the world headquarters for Nissan, where the final decision to build a \$1 billion plant was made two years ago.

When we announced that Nissan was building here, we showed the world a new Mississippi – a Mississippi with a skilled workforce ready to fill 4,000 new jobs; a Mississippi committed to improving the lives of its people; a Mississippi ready to compete with the world.

Just a few weeks ago, we reinforce that new image of Mississippi when the decision was made to expand the Nissan plant with an additional \$500 million investment. This expansion was announced before the first phase was even finished – a strong demonstration of Nissan's confidence in doing business here. The second phase means Mississippi is gaining another 1,300 jobs and taking another step forward in building its future.

The numbers are impressive – a facility measuring well over 2 million square feet; over 5,000 new jobs waiting to be filled by Mississippians; and a plant that will build 400,000 cars each year.

But the statistics, while impressive, don't tell the most important part of the story. The story's about the workers who will be employed at the plant or one of the suppliers currently building at locations around the state.

The story's about what having the Unipres facility down in Forest is going to mean to the economy of east central Mississippi.

The story's about how the investment or the jobs are going to make a difference in your lives.

That's the most exciting part of the story.

That's the part that tells of the food going on the table, of the clothes on our children's backs, of the solid roof over our heads when we go to sleep at night. It tells of the sense of security, of confidence, of self-esteem, that comes with having a good job.

And there's more to this story. Northrop Grumman Ship Systems in Harrison County added 520 new jobs. Lane Home Furnishings in Lee County added 400 new jobs.

The Alcoa plant in DeSoto County was targeted for closure, but we worked with the company and convinced them to stay. The end result was an expansion of their facility through a \$17 million capital investment and 200 additional jobs.

When Whirlpool was looking to consolidate its operations, it decided to close facilities in Canada and other areas and expand its operation in Oxford. The \$10 million capital investment there led to 150 new jobs.

The impact of the Nissan plant isn't just hitting central Mississippi. It's hitting places like Greenville, where Brown Corporation – a Nissan supplier – is investing \$5.5 million and creating 250 new jobs.

And just two days ago, we demonstrated our commitment to one of our own, Howard Industries. Our investment in their expansion is a good one, with a guarantee of 2,000 new jobs at a company doing business in 150 countries around the world from their base in Jones County.

I also want to thank the membership of the Legislature for their hard work on these projects as well. I appreciate their vision for our state.

Whether it's two men in a truck or 5,000 people building a truck, economic development is important for Mississippi.

## **EDUCATION**

Creating jobs for the people of this state has become a trademark of my administration, but building a future for the children of this state through quality education is my personal passion.

As chairman of the Senate Education Committee, as lieutenant governor, and now as governor, I have always worked to build schools that set the standard for others to follow.

When I spoke to you here last year, we had just taken away the last obstacle standing in the way of a teacher pay raise. We made the decision we would pay our teachers as the professionals they are – and the rest of the country took notice.

By the end of the year, we'll have an Internet-accessible computer in every public school classroom in the state, and we're doing it with the help of some of the most technologically advanced people in the state – our children. That's right; over 100 of our

kids – some right here in Neshoba County – are building nearly 6,000 computers to go into the classrooms.

Don't think these kids don't understand about the commitment they're making or the importance of the work they're doing. They know their work will help generations coming behind them. The evidence of that can be found in students like (*find student from Philadelphia area*)

We have accountability measures for our schools stronger than anything proposed out of Washington, D.C., measures that are strengthening our schools and improving their reason for being – the education of our children.

Our work is paying off.

Test scores in our elementary and secondary schools this year were up dramatically over last year. This is strong evidence that we've been doing something right, and our teachers and administrators should be thanked for their good work.

The former state superintendent of education referred to the scores as “astounding” and “incredible.” The test scores were incredible, given where we've been; but I might use other words to really describe the work of our students, words that reflect the confidence we all have in our children and the God-given talents within each of them.

A Princeton Review report ranking the states based on their testing programs for schools was released last month, and the report shows a new Mississippi.

Where were we in the national ranking? We weren't 50<sup>th</sup>. We weren't 49<sup>th</sup>. We weren't 40<sup>th</sup>, or 30<sup>th</sup>, or 20<sup>th</sup>. We weren't even ranked 10<sup>th</sup>.

Mississippi ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the nation. Sixth.

All of the work we're doing in education lays the foundation for what we're doing to build our state, to create new jobs and expand industry. Don't think that when a company looks at moving to Mississippi the only thing they care about is our investment in them. They're also looking at our investment in ourselves.

The moral of this story is simple. Quality education means quality jobs. We all win with a well-educated workforce.

## JOBS

I spoke earlier about the Advantage Mississippi Initiative. This program, one I unveiled here at the Neshoba County Fair – is the most aggressive and most creative economic development program in the country – and that isn't just my opinion, it's the opinion of the economic development community around the world.

The Advantage Mississippi Initiative is one of the reasons *Site Selection* magazine ranked us as one of the top ten states in the country to do business. It's one of the reasons Nissan executives have talked of coming here because of the “dynamic business climate.” It's one of the reasons companies are staying in Mississippi and growing their operations instead of moving somewhere else.

There are other tools we use as well. When a business does make a decision to close its doors, we're ready with our Rapid Response Team. We go directly to the business and work with them to make sure their employees aren't left hanging, because *our commitment to business carries an equally strong commitment to you.*

The Rapid Response Team. The Workforce Investment Network Job Centers. Job Fairs. These are tools we use to help build business and, more importantly, communities.

The work we're doing to create jobs is more important than ever. And rest assured, this work isn't going to stop – not on my watch.

This story isn't about the statistics – it's about the opportunities, the dreams, and the hopes each of you hold inside. It's about the people – and the promise – of Mississippi.

It's been said that the “future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.” We all have beautiful dreams for this state. Don't stop believing in them; I promise you I won't.

The story of Mississippi – the story of our commitment to education, of our dedication to creating new jobs, of our beautiful dreams – it's a story made real by the hard work of people around this state. It's a story made real by each of you here today.

It's a great story. It's a great time for the state of Mississippi. It feels like coming home, home to a place that's safe and secure, a place where dreams come true.

I'm proud to be doing this work, and I want to thank you for the chance to do it. God bless you, God bless Mississippi, and God bless America!