

Neshoba County Fair
Stump Speech
Thursday, July 27
11:40 a.m.
(You have 10 minutes)

Wow, how great it is to be here!

For about 10 years now I have been spending a couple of days here at the Neshoba County Fair. Some of those years I have just been here to visit with friends and enjoy the flavor of the Fair. And during a few of those visits I have been right here on this stage in the middle of Founders Square talking to hundreds of Mississippians, and I must say – this is the best crowd I’ve ever seen!

(story)

Last year when I was here speaking, I was campaigning for the Office of Governor. At that time Mississippians were looking for a governor who would provide good, strong leadership and would give us straight talk and real answers.

That is what you were looking for in a governor, and that is what you got.

Mississippi needs a Governor who was not afraid to work hard. You need a Governor who gets up with the roosters and works long into the night. You need a Governor who reflects the decent, hard working people of Mississippi, one who can work with the legislature to bring more, better paying jobs to Mississippi working families.

That is what you need, and that is what you have. We have hit the ground running, and we are just getting started.

In our first legislative session we took what I believe is to be the largest step forward for this state in the area of education that has ever been taken. I campaigned on raising teacher pay in Mississippi to the Southeastern average, and when it looked like there was no hope for it to pass this year, we enlisted the help of the media and the people of this state, to let legislators know that we couldn’t wait any longer.

We marked our 100th day of this administration with the passage of a teacher pay raise bill that addressed accountability along with pay raises. Our teachers deserved this pay raise, and the future of Mississippi’s childrens’ education relied upon this pay raise. On May 1st of this year, we victoriously signed House Bill 1281, which will raise teacher pay to the Southeastern average. Are there any teachers here who are happy about their much deserved pay raises?

I want you to know that my first priority this next legislative session will be to eliminate the bogus 5% provision of the bill. We will fund the teacher pay raise next year and

every year after because it is the right thing to do for the people of Mississippi. It is a matter of priority, and education must be a priority.

We are placing a world of information at the fingertips of every Mississippi child. Every public school classroom will have an Internet-accessible computer by the end of 2002. That will make Mississippi the first state to achieve such a lofty goal, but we are doing what it takes to prepare our children to be successful right here in Mississippi.

Sound, solid, accessible healthcare in Mississippi is vital to a good quality of life for our people. On the 113th day of this administration we announced the creation of a new opportunities for doctors have their medical school paid for by establishing their medical practice in our states' critical areas of need. That means more health care opportunity for you here in Neshoba County and in Washington County, in Lincoln County and in Prentiss County. It affects every Mississippi family no matter where you live. We are making progress, but we won't stop until every Mississippian has access to medical services, doctors and nurses.

On July 1st, the 172nd day of this administration, we saw an increase of 83,225 Mississippi children enrolled in the Children's Health Insurance Program. We have found new ways to inform our working families about this insurance program, and Mississippi's families now have the health insurance they so desperately need for their children.

Senior Mississippians are vibrant, thriving and play a vital role in every community across our state. We are exploring new ways to develop feasible and accountable solutions, which will address the needs of Mississippi's growing senior adult population. Plans are now underway for a Seniors Summit where we will determine our seniors' greatest areas of need. Are there senior adults here today who need a voice in our state's vision for their well being?

We will continue to mark our progress and assess the work we do for the people of Mississippi.

We are listening to you. We hear you loud and clear and we are responding to your needs. Mississippians deserve good, high paying jobs that allow them to provide for their families and enjoy a good quality of life.

A new economic development plan for our state is the key to better, higher paying jobs for the people of Mississippi. The current plan has not been changed in ten years, and we are losing out to other states who have changed their plans to meet the needs of the business and industry that is looking to relocate or expand.

We must make changes now that will give our state the competitive edge we need. We have traveled this state from one end to the other talking to businessmen and women, community leaders, planners, developers, and anybody else who wanted to tell us what they think we need to do to replace our current out-dated economic development strategy.

The ideas and suggestions we gathered from our discussions have been combined with the work of economic development experts to develop a new plan that is expansive and comprehensive.

You may ask, ‘how will a new economic strategy help me?’ This new strategy means more jobs, more Mississippians working and better opportunities for our people. New business and industry expanding and moving into our state means more people working in every profession. From doctors-to lawyers. From real estate professionals-to construction workers. When our state succeeds, we all succeed.

This new economic development plan will take the approval of the Mississippi Legislature, and that is why I am calling a special Legislative Session on (Month XX) of this year for the Legislature to review and approve the plan. We cannot wait until next year. We must choose now to make Mississippi, America’s State of Promise.

We are determined to improve the quality of life for our people. We continue to face challenges, and we are creating long-term solutions to meet those challenges. We want our people to be able to build their families, build their homes and build their lives right here in Mississippi.

It’s all about our people – investing in our people. Education. Healthcare. Jobs. Quality of life.

We are America’s State of Promise!

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