

NGA: State Issues Briefing Material

Education

- In your State of the State address on January 9, you challenged the Legislature to fund education first, to fund it at 62 percent of the general fund budget, and to fund it by the third week of January.
- You signed two bills on February 5, funding K-12 and higher education at 62 percent of the general fund. The legislation also fully funded MAEP and the teacher pay raise.
- Early appropriation of education represented historic action and historic cooperation for the people of the state.
- Great strides being made in education:
 - Teacher pay from 49th to 19th
 - “Computers in the Classroom”
 - MS one of six states in “Following the Leader” / No Child Left Behind
 - Princeton Review: MS has 6th best testing in nation
 - Leadership Summit – 6 priorities from early childhood to adult learning
 - MS in top 10 in number of nationally board certified teachers / first state to offer incentive pay for certification
- Good schools, good jobs, good communities

Medical Malpractice

- You said as early as May 2002 that you would call a special session to address the critical needs surrounding the affordability and availability of medical malpractice insurance for Mississippi’s doctors.
- You called that special session in September 2002, with a specific call focusing on medical malpractice reform.
- During the special session, you presented your plan for a compensation fund (insurance pool) to provide relief for doctors. Insurance Commissioner George Dale was instructed to conduct a study on the viability of such a fund for consideration during the regular session.
- You signed the medical malpractice legislation on October 8.
- Legislation on the compensation fund plan is headed to conference. The House plan requires publicly-owned hospitals to participate in the plan, with a provision that they can opt out of the plan if they find insurance at a lower rate. The Senate version does not contain the opt out provision.
- At this time, 535 doctors and 46 hospitals are at risk of losing coverage because of the financial problems of their insurer, Reciprocal of America.

Haley Barbour

- You're fighting to improve education and create quality, high-paying jobs for the people of Mississippi.
- There will be time for politics later.

Base Closure

- We will do everything we can to keep jobs in Mississippi.
- The Mississippi congressional delegation must also be actively involved in the process.