

*Remarks for the
Phi Theta Kappa All-State Academic Luncheon
March 19, 2002*

Thank you, Senator Burton. It's good to be here to help recognize the very best Mississippi has to offer – our own Phi Theta Kappa All-State Academic Team.

These young people have committed themselves to making the very most of their potential and their promise. They appreciate the fact, as it was once said, that education is “the soul of a society passed from one generation to another.”

Together, we share a common goal and a common vision for Mississippi – the very best education available and the opportunity to use that education here at home.

It has been a difficult year for education in this state, but it didn't have to be. Things can and will be better, when our budget is crafted with education as a priority.

Schools, teachers and students shouldn't have to endure another year like this one. I'm going to fight to make sure it doesn't happen again – I know Senator Burton will join me in that effort – and we can use your help.

A couple of weeks ago, an editorial about education in the Clarion-Ledger stated that “it's the lack of spending priorities that is destructive.”

When you do a budget for your household, you don't add in income in the hopes it will just appear. You set priorities.

It's not a difficult concept, but you have to be disciplined to make it work.

We're earning a reputation for our forward-thinking approaches to education. I don't want that reputation tarnished because we didn't get what we hoped for with regards to the economy.

It's not right, and it's not fair to our students.

We can make education work in Mississippi.

We **will** make education work in

Mississippi. But, we have to do it together.

It's an obligation we have to these students we honor here today, and it's an obligation we have to generations to come.

Our shared commitment to education makes days like this possible. Let's keep the commitment strong, because generations are depending on the work we do together.

Thank you.