

*Remarks for the
Private Prisons Press Conference
July 24, 2002*

Good afternoon. As of July 1, state contracts with the operators of the private prison facilities in the State of Mississippi were terminated. This action was taken in an effort to ensure the best use of the state's money in meeting the needs of the correctional system and guarding the safety of the general public.

Those contracts have been successfully renegotiated, and the savings are notable. We will save approximately \$9 million over the next two years.

These savings break down to \$6 million in operating expenses and capital expenses for this fiscal year. Also, we anticipate saving approximately \$3 million in operating expenses for fiscal year 2004.

In addition to saving state dollars, these contracts are consistent with our goal of the best prison management and policies possible.

With the new contracts in place, we can focus on better meeting the needs of the entire corrections system, especially with regards to mentally ill and youthful offenders.

We are committed to the very best use of our public dollars, **and we recommend these savings be directed to the critical needs we face in education.** Making good use of public money is good public policy – and today we’re seeing the best of public policy at work.

The cooperative spirit of the private prisons, members of the Legislature and Commissioner Robert Johnson during the negotiation process led to the result we’re announcing today, and I want to thank them for their work.