

*Remarks for the
DGA Luncheon
March 26, 2003*

Everyone has an image of Mississippi in their mind – I’m sure each of you here has an image of what the state is like. It may be an image of cotton fields in the Delta, it may be an image of riverboats and antebellum homes, it may be an image of the racial strife of the 1960’s.

Today you’re going to leave with a different image of Mississippi – an image of a state that is moving faster than anyone else into the 21st century, a state that is competing and leading in the global marketplace, a state that is setting new standards in education and economic development.

In today's economy, Mississippi is like many other states.

■ Every state impacted by national recession

- More than \$7 trillion lost in stock market
- More than 2 million Americans out of work
- States cutting school week / releasing prisoners / massive lay-offs

■ Have to protect people in the short term

while preparing for the long term

- Best way to do that is through investing in education and creating jobs
- Here's where I want to start changing your image of Mississippi

- Many think of us as 48th, 49th, 50th in education
 - That's no longer true
 - Education is our first priority / has been for past three years since I've been in office
 - Public schools are our cornerstones of our communities and the key to the success of our economy.

- Mississippi is a recognized leader in education
 - Teacher pay / 49th to 19th when fully implemented
 - Princeton Review: 6th best testing system in nation
 - Leading other states in preparedness for “No Child Left Behind” / USA Today article
 - 6th in the nation in National Board Certified Teachers

- One of the most exciting successes in education is in technology
 - Every public school classroom in the state has Internet-accessible computer
 - Mississippi first state in the nation to achieve this goal / confirmed by NGA

- Other states are also watching what we've done with education funding
 - In my State of the State address, challenged Legislature to fund education at 62% of budget, and fund it first
 - They rose to the challenge, and I signed legislation within next 3 weeks

- Mississippi was first state in the nation to pass education funding bills
 - Also the only state to increase funding while others are cutting
 - That is significant in light of national recession
 - Demonstrates our priority / our commitment

- Efforts in education didn't just start this year
 - Have been working on this since I took office
 - We are making strong progress
 - It's happening because of effective leadership

- We're proving to the people of Mississippi, and the rest of the nation, that we're serious about education
 - Making the investment now for dividends tomorrow

- When it comes to education, we mean business
 - Business means jobs

- Time to change another image of Mississippi
 - No longer a state that depends on agriculture / low wage jobs
 - We are aggressive about creating quality, high-paying jobs for our people

- Since I took office in January 2000 through the end of February, we've grown like never before
 - 2,103 new and expanded facilities
 - More than 50,000 new jobs
 - Total business investment in Mississippi of \$14.1 billion

- We are putting our people to work in highly skilled jobs with good pay
 - Nissan plant opening in May / only auto plant opening in America this year
 - \$1.5 billion investment by Nissan / 5,000 direct jobs
 - Even more from suppliers

- We gained the attention of companies around the world when we landed Nissan
 - Now more than ever, Mississippi is being visited by companies
 - In the middle of national recession, we've had several companies just this week visiting sites across the state

- They are coming to Mississippi because the word is out about what we can do
 - Site Selection magazine: Mississippi ranked as Top 10 location for new companies
 - One of top 10 states for small business survival

- Expansion magazine: 4 Mississippi cities ranked in latest survey of 50 hottest American cities for expansion or location of facilities

- When businesses read these industry publications, they see that Mississippi has something to offer
 - They realize the image has changed

- Now working to pass Mississippi Rural Economic Impact Authority
 - \$20 million to aid economic development in rural areas
 - Funding to cover workforce training at community colleges

- We're looking to the future of MS / where do we want to go?
 - Good schools / good jobs / good communities

- We get there through effective leadership and with a proven commodity

- The image of the Mississippi of 2003 is unlike anything anyone could have imagined
 - It's an image of people working in highly-skilled, well-paying jobs
 - It's an image of children in classrooms equipped with the technology to bring the world to their desk

- It's an image of global companies looking for a place to do business in the state

- Effective leadership is making a difference in Mississippi
 - It's important to keep that leadership in place

- Many of you may know that I'm up for re-election this year
 - One of three races in the country
 - Only incumbent in the nation
 - Only Democratic governor left in the Deep South

- You may be familiar with my opponent
(pause and smile)
 - Goes by the name of Haley Barbour

- I've spent my career providing effective leadership for the people of Mississippi
 - He has been here in Washington for the last 20 years

- This will be a challenging race and I've never backed away from a challenge
 - Especially when the future of our state is at stake

- I've given you an idea of what we're doing in Mississippi
 - There's so much more that we can do

- You've heard the phrase "vote early and vote often"
 - Since you can't vote, I'll ask you to "give early and give often"
 - Help keep effective leadership in place for Mississippi
 - Help keep a Democratic governor working for Mississippians