

For immediate release

March 31, 2000

Contact: Lisa Mader

(601) 359-3227

An open letter from First Lady Melanie Musgrove:

When the governor and I were first married, I worked as a legal assistant to help us pay the bills while Ronnie was attending law school at the University of Mississippi. I was content doing that job, but when Ronnie finished law school and began his practice in Batesville, he encouraged me to get my degree in Elementary Education. He says that he always thought I would be a good teacher.

I completed my degree in 1991 and began working at Pope Elementary School where I taught reading to 5th and 6th grade students, and I continued teaching throughout Ronnie's campaign for governor until January 11, 2000, which was the day he was sworn into office.

Many people have asked me if moving from the classroom to the Governor's Mansion would lessen my interest in teaching. Nothing could be further from the truth. I simply see that my role as a teacher has changed somewhat.

Now I have the opportunity to travel the state and talk to a wide variety about issues that I feel are important to the people of our state. The most important issue that I have been discussing with Mississippians is the fact that our teachers are underpaid for the jobs that they do.

I have supported the Governor's efforts to raise teacher pay, not just because he is my husband, and not just because I have been a teacher for 8 years. I support his efforts because it is the right thing to do for the teachers and for the students of Mississippi.

Our teachers hold the future of our State in their hands. They are imparting wisdom to our children, and those children will take what they have been taught and use it to become the leaders of tomorrow.

As a former teacher, and someone who has seen other teachers struggle to make ends meet, I am asking the legislature to make a commitment today to raise teacher pay. It is critical to Mississippi's future.

#