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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**SOUTHERN GROWTH POLICIES BOARD RELEASES
*SOUTHERN INNOVATION INDEX***

Report Tracks Innovation and Entrepreneurship in the South

Officials with the Southern Growth Policies Board, a bipartisan policy think tank based in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina have released the *Southern Innovation Index*. The index is a strategic plan created with the governments of 13 Southern states and Puerto Rico to promote innovation, entrepreneurship and economic growth in the South.

The *Southern Innovation Index* identifies 56 benchmarks and 10-year targets for each of the Southern Growth member states – Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and the commonwealth of Puerto Rico – to track the progress of technology and innovation initiatives in the region. The Index contains state-by-state data and summaries relative to the publication's primary goals:

- Creating a culture of learning throughout the South, in which the acquisition, creation and application of knowledge is viewed as central to health, happiness and prosperity.
- Encouraging and supporting innovation and entrepreneurship.

"The Southern Innovation Index is a departure from previous technology reports," explained Mississippi Governor Ronnie Musgrove, the chairman of the Southern Growth Policies Board. "This is the first regional plan in which the states have set tangible goals and targets to build economic capacity and wealth with innovation."

(MORE)

Southern Growth Policies Board

Several benchmarks and targets included in The Southern Innovation Index track the region's progress in performing research and development (R&D) in the industrial, university and government sectors. The *Index* also contains an analysis of the region's R&D share in the last four decades drawing on data from the National Science Foundation. The South's share of both national federal and university R&D has steadily increased in 30 years.

Five of the Southern Growth's member states had more than 1 percent each of the nation's federally performed research in 1999, with Virginia leading the way with 10.28 percent. Alabama was second in the region with 4.42 percent, followed by Georgia, North Carolina and Mississippi.

Only two Southern Growth member states performed more than 1 percent of the nation's industrially-performed research total in 2000: North Carolina (1.84 percent) and Virginia (1.36 percent). Arkansas, North Carolina and Mississippi had increases of 150 percent or more in their shares of total industrial research pie from 1963-2000.

"It seems clear, that in many areas, Mississippi has made progress in building its research and development capacity. We must continue to develop new, effective strategies to encourage and nurture industrially-performed research in the region," said, Robert J. Rohrlack, Jr., executive director, Mississippi Development Authority. .

A long-term initiative of the Southern Growth Policies Board and the Southern Technology Council (STC), The Southern Innovation Index is the third installment in a series of Invented Here reports. Invented Here: Transforming the Southern Economy, released in 2001, provided the groundwork for setting state goals and benchmarks.

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Editors note: For a full copy of the report, contact Leigh Ann Wilder, at www.lwilder@southern.org.

To learn more about Southern Growth Policies Board, visit www.southern.org.