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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DATE: October 22, 2002

**UNITED STATES MINT CELEBRATES RELEASE OF
THE MISSISSIPPI QUARTER
'Magnolia State' Honored on Final State Quarter of 2002**

JACKSON, Miss., - Governor Ronnie Musgrove today joined United States Mint Director Henrietta Holsman Fore at the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science to unveil the 20th state quarter in the 50 State Quarters Program, honoring the "Magnolia State's" famous flora. Hundreds attended and heard remarks by Governor Musgrove, Director Fore and other special guests.

"This is an exciting and historical day for Mississippi. This coin showcases the beauty throughout our state and symbolizes our southern heritage," said Governor Ronnie Musgrove. "We're pleased that so many Mississippi school children and our citizens participated in today's historical event. For years to come, Mississippians can be proud of this coin and its unique design.

"Mississippi is synonymous with some of the most beautiful flowers and trees in the world," said Fore. "It is fitting that the Mississippi quarter honor the magnolia, an enduring symbol of the beauty of the South," She added that Mississippians should be proud of this coin and the place it represents in the 50 State Quarters Program.

The Mississippi quarter, the fifth and last quarter of 2002 and the 20th in the series, showcases the beauty and elegance of the state flower, combining the blossoms and leaves of two magnolias with the inscription "The Magnolia State."

The magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), named for the French botanist Pierre Magnol, is strongly associated with the South where the flower became enormously popular after it was introduced from Asia. This association became strong enough that Mississippi adopted it as the state flower in 1952.

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The release of the Mississippi state quarter marked the end of production of the Indiana state quarter, released in August 2002. The quarters are manufactured at the Philadelphia and Denver Mints, which produce all U.S. circulating coins, and ship them to the Federal Reserve for distribution to the nation's banks.

Launched in 1999, the United States Mint's 50 State Quarters is a 10-year initiative that honors each of the nation's states in the order that they joined the Union. Each quarter is produced for about 10 weeks and will never be produced again. Surveys show that over 139 million adults are collecting the quarters.

The 50 State Quarters products, including the popular collectible proof sets featuring the five state quarter of each year, are adding to the collecting fun. These products and more information about the 50 State Quarters Program are available through the Mint's Web site at www.usmint.gov or by calling 1-800-USA-MINT.

Created by Congress in 1792, the Mint is a manufacturing and international marketing enterprise with \$2.4 billion in annual revenue and about 2,600 employees. In FY 2002, the Mint produced more than 20 billion coins, fulfilling its primary mission to produce an adequate supply of circulating coinage for the nation's commerce. For more information, please visit www.usmint.gov.