

**For Immediate Release**  
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## **GOVERNOR MUSGROVE SIGNS HISTORIC EDUCATION BILLS**

(Jackson, MS) – In a ceremony today at the state capitol, Governor Ronnie Musgrove signed into law Senate Bill 2678 and House Bill 1033. Both bills were passed by the Legislature on January 31.

“Today, Mississippi has entered a new era. By funding education first and at a level of 62 percent, we are sending a signal statewide and nationally that even during these tough economic times, we mean business about education,” Musgrove said. “While other states are cutting education, we have taken the bold step to put our children and our future first. We know that good schools attract good jobs, which build good communities.”

Musgrove called on the Legislature to fund education first and at a level of 62 percent of the budget during his State of the State speech on January 9, 2003. “I am calling on you to appropriate pre-kindergarten through higher education in one comprehensive bill, and at 62 percent of the general fund. Let’s prove to the people of Mississippi we care about our schools.”

In November, Governor Musgrove submitted a budget for fiscal year 2004 which invested 62 percent in education.

“Today, we have changed the way we fund education forever,” said Musgrove. “I want to commend the Legislature for joining me in the fight to make education our top priority.”

State education leaders praised the Governor and the legislature for their action.

“We are very appreciative of the Governor and his initiative to put education first. It is a truly historic day and we are thankful for this priority on education,” said Dr. Wayne Stonecypher, Executive Director for Community and Junior Colleges. “We are also appreciative of the Legislature moving so quickly. We hope this priority continues in the future.”

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Commissioner-elect Dr. David L. Potter said, "With the signing of this bill today, Governor Musgrove and the Legislature have taken historic and bold action to fund education first, making Mississippi the envy of every educational system in the country. Today's action will provide our students, faculty and staff with much needed funding in a year when we feared another major cut."

"With the passage and signing of this historic legislation, Mississippi's leaders have sent a message not only to the citizens of Mississippi, but to the rest of the nation that we are serious about education," said State Superintendent of Education Dr. Henry Johnson. "We truly owe our gratitude to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Speaker of the House for their leadership as well as to education and appropriation leaders in each chamber.

"This funding will allow us to continue to provide increased salaries for our teachers as well as sustain and implement instructional initiatives to meet requirements of No Child Left Behind and state accountability standards," added Johnson. "There is no doubt that Mississippi students will be the true beneficiaries as we continue to improve our public education system."

The \$2.7 billion appropriation bills provide \$236 million above the legislative budget recommendation.

House Bill 1033 funds kindergarten through high school with \$142.5 million more for a total of \$1.95 billion. This level fully funds Mississippi Adequate Education for the first time and funds the teacher pay raise.

Senate Bill 2678 funds higher education with community colleges at \$172 million or \$23.5 million more and public universities at \$585 million or \$70 million additional dollars.

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