

**For Immediate Release**

April 11, 2003

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## **Governors Musgrove and Riley Agree on Regional Alliance**

(Montgomery, AL) – Governor Ronnie Musgrove and Alabama Governor Bob Riley agreed today to move forward with the implementation of a regional alliance between the two states in an effort to attract jobs and industry along the border shared by the states. Musgrove announced in an April 1 press conference that discussions had been underway for some time on this initiative.

“I’m pleased with the progress we’re making on this proposed alliance and with the potential it has for our two states,” Musgrove said. “With the impact of the national recession on every state, it’s important to look for ways to combine strengths and improve the quality of life for our citizens.”

Bob Rohrlack, executive director of the Mississippi Development Authority, and Neal Wade, director of the Alabama Development Office, have been in strategic discussions for the past several months on the initiative. Musgrove said they would continue to focus on the development of a letter of agreement to be signed by the governors.

"This is further evidence that Mississippi is serious about economic development strategies. With this new alliance in place, we will aggressively explore opportunities across the globe offering quality jobs to our citizens," Rohrlack stated.

“We are trying to make the best use of our resources, property and location to attract new jobs and industries to this area,” said Musgrove. “Both states have proven their ability to compete in the global marketplace, and this is an opportunity to combine forces for an even stronger impact.”

Musgrove said once an agreement is reached, Rohrlack and Wade would submit a report to the governors to create a regional economic development district.

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Mississippi's economic development package, known as the Advantage Mississippi Initiative, passed in the first year of Musgrove's term and was the key to the state landing the \$1.4 billion Nissan plant, and has attracted many other businesses as well. The Initiative provides for the creation of regional economic development districts across state lines at the county and municipal levels. Similar legislation would need to be passed in Alabama.

"Industries are looking for the best incentives to locate their facilities, invest money and create jobs," Musgrove said. "One of the objectives of Advantage Mississippi was to set a framework for the development of regional alliances. We have been working with Wade Jones and the East Mississippi Development Corporation for over a year and we appreciate their efforts and visions for quality jobs in this part of the state."

Mississippi was listed by *Site Selection* magazine last year as one of the top ten states for new and expanded facilities, and last September, the state was named one of the top ten states for small business survival. The January 2003 issue of *Expansion Management* magazine ranked four Mississippi cities in its survey of America's 50 hottest cities for business expansions. Under Musgrove's leadership and during a national recession, more than 2,000 new and expanded facilities have opened, creating more than 50,000 jobs and a total business investment of over \$14 billion.

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