

**For Immediate Release**

January 9, 2003

**Contact:** John Sewell

601-359-2916

## **Governor Musgrove Focuses on Education In State of the State Address**

(Jackson, MS) – In his third State of the State Address, Governor Ronnie Musgrove called for the Mississippi Legislature to fund education at 62 percent of the general fund, the level called for in his executive budget recommendation.

“I propose that you appropriate pre-kindergarten through higher education in one comprehensive bill, and at 62 percent of the general fund,” Musgrove said. “Let’s prove to the people of Mississippi we care about our schools. Let’s prove to them that when it comes to education, we mean business – and business means jobs.”

Musgrove called on legislators to present him with the bill by the last week of January.

Citing a list of education successes including the teacher pay raise, rising test scores, more high school graduates going to college, and Mississippi as the first state in the nation with an Internet-accessible computer in every public school classroom, Musgrove said it was time to strengthen the state’s investment in education.

Other education initiatives discussed by the governor included the development of a “Summer Start” program, which would offer children two months of schooling before and after their kindergarten year. Summer Start, Musgrove said, would “reduce drop-out rates, increase the skills of our future workforce, and ultimately save the state millions.”

Musgrove also called for the expansion of the existing “Support our Students” after-school program, saying it should be expanded from the current 19 sites to more than 250.

(more)

**State of the State Address**  
**January 9, 2003**  
**Page 2**

Saying that higher education has a critical role to play in economic development, Musgrove urged funding for his \$200 million (\$20 million a year over ten years) “brain trust,” to recruit and retain the best minds for research, development and workforce training at Mississippi’s universities and colleges.

Musgrove discussed job creation in the state, saying that more than 49,000 new jobs had been created since January 2000, and more than 23,000 of those jobs had come through the expansion of existing industries. Total investment in new and expanded businesses for the same time period exceeds \$13.5 billion.

The creation of jobs in Mississippi’s rural areas is the focus of the Mississippi Rural Economic Impact Authority, which Musgrove proposed to help lure industry. Under the proposal, \$20 million in bonds would be issued to provide assistance to new and existing businesses, as well as training for people who have lost jobs in rural Mississippi.

Musgrove urged legislators to work with him to strengthen the state’s efforts in education and economic development.

“I want us to work to make dreams become realities for our people. We determine the legacy of our work,” Musgrove said. “We shouldn’t be afraid to try new and bold things. We shouldn’t be afraid to say, ‘we can.’”

###