



GOVERNOR RONNIE MUSGROVE

Excerpts – State of State

January 9, 2003

The first order of business is to put our schools first, because we know that communities with good public schools attract good jobs

Our responsibility is to deal with the impact of the national recession here in Mississippi through sensible policies that protect our citizens in the short term and prepare them for the long term.

My first priority is protecting education and Mississippi's future.

Giving our children the opportunity to succeed – giving them a good education – still remains the best hope for lifting us to greater heights.

Education is not only the concern of the parents and grandparents. It's a community concern. People want to live in a good community. Good schools attract good jobs, which build good communities.

Higher education has a critical role to play in bringing jobs to Mississippi.

My budget invests 62 percent of the general fund in education. This enhances our future; anything less shortchanges it. I'm fighting to increase funding for education and the people of Mississippi need you to join the fight with me. The beaten path is not always the best. The status quo is simply not good enough.

I am calling on you to appropriate pre-kindergarten through higher education in one comprehensive bill, and at 62 percent of the general fund. Pass it, put it on my desk and I'll sign it – and I don't mean the last week of March, I mean the third week of January.

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.

If we shortchange our investment in education, we shortchange our future, and that's not an alternative I'm willing to accept.

Since January 2000, more than 49,000 new jobs have been created in Mississippi. More than 23,000 of those jobs were created through the expansion of existing industries. Over \$13.5 billion has been invested in new and expanded businesses.

Rural areas of this state have been hit hard by NAFTA. In fact they've been hit the hardest. We must smart and aggressive in creating jobs.

Three years ago, I made a pledge to the people of Mississippi – unprecedented goals, unparalleled progress. We've forged solutions because we dared to say "we can." Let's be willing to dare again.