

Public Questions For the Week of July 7:

1. Howard Industries

We are pleased that the Howard Industries project is moving forward and will provide over 2,000 new high tech jobs at a time when the nation's unemployment rate is at a nine-year high. We are looking forward to attending the ground breaking Wednesday in Ellisville at the Jones County Junior College. A bond sale has been scheduled for August with monies available in September.

2. USA Today articles

I disagree with the study. The Rockefeller Institute of Government recently released a report citing the national recession as the #1 reason that states have seen declines in revenue. States shouldn't be rewarded for raising taxes and cutting vital services to their people. In Mississippi, we set education as our top priority, balanced our budget without depleting our rainy day fund, and we didn't raise taxes.

We understand the need to make difficult decisions to balance the budget and have worked hard to accomplish that. I oppose any effort to do so by raising taxes or making cuts to essential services. Again, I respectfully disagree with the results of study that rewards states for raising taxes and I consider it a compliment that Mississippi was not put in the same category as those states.

3. Affirmative Action

We continue to work hard to ensure that all Mississippians have access to a quality education regardless of race. It is critical that we as a society seek the delicate balance between providing inclusive diversity and equal opportunity for all of our citizens under the law. Racial quotas are not the answer for our colleges and universities. The path to a better society is by investing in a lifetime of education for all of our citizens. We continue to work hard to ensure that all Mississippians have access to a quality education regardless of race. When we do, we attract quality high paying jobs that build great communities.

4. End of Year collections

Mississippi ended the 2003 Fiscal Year with a balanced budget because of determined priorities and good fiscal policies. Our state has felt the effects of the national recession. However, we have continued to use sound and conservative fiscal policies in managing our state's resources. The result is a balanced budget without raising taxes. Many states across the country have resorted to raising taxes, laying off employees, shortening schools weeks and releasing prisoners to balance their budgets. The Rockefeller Institute recently released a report citing the national recession as the main reason for the decline in revenue collections.

5. Supreme Court Decision on Texas Case

The decision of the U.S. Supreme Court to support the homosexual agenda does not reflect Mississippi values.

9. Use of agency funds/DWFP article Sunday

The intent of the legislation, HB 1667, was to provide the Treasurer with the tools to manage state dollars without disrupting services and without jeopardizing federal funds. The state treasurer and his office have assured us that there is no reason to believe that state services will be hurt or federal dollars lost. This is just good fiscal management of taxpayer dollars.

10. Social Worker

Thelma Brittain has taken an aggressive approach, actively recruiting social workers and recommending a new position to assist social workers to address the demand, so that every child is safe. We are in the process of meeting with Hoopy Stringer at the State Personnel Board to add a classification of child protective worker to start hiring immediately.

11. National Guard

In 2001, when Jody Bryant approached General Lipscomb, General Lipscomb immediately took action and asked for an investigation by the Department of Defense, the initial review has been finished, and actions taken on substantiated complaints. (The complaints were based on activity that happened a number of years prior to this administration.)

General Lipscomb requested that any remaining complaints be reviewed, and an out-of-state general is currently conducting review. I am confident in General Lipscomb's abilities to take decisive action for any wrongdoing doings and misconduct. He has been an example for our guard members who have served overseas in Bosnia, Korea, and Iraq. Our Mississippi guard is the strongest we have ever been and there are more guardsmen serving Mississippi and our nation than four years ago.

12. Oakley/Columbia

Thelma has reassured us that she has taken the appropriate action to ensure the safety and well being of the children who have been located at these two training facilities. I have asked for frequent reports from DHS regarding these matters. DHS has worked with state and federal authorities and has implemented corrective measures.

13. Denial of Assistance for federal disaster

Robert Latham is currently working with local emergency management officials and boards of supervisors for an accurate count so that we may appeal to the President FEMA's denial.

14. Bureau of Narcotics

Frank Melton is very passionate about the war on drugs and is on the frontline fighting daily. As a father, Frank share's my concern about the devastating impact of drugs in our communities and our children. It is time to take a more aggressive approach.

15. Canadian National RR

We are aggressively working with them to keep the lines open.