

*Who initiated the idea – Governor Riley or Governor Musgrove?*

As part of Governor Musgrove's Advantage Mississippi Initiative, which passed in 2000, the Mississippi Regional Alliance Development Program promotes the development of alliances at the local governmental level between government units, including government units from another state. The Mississippi Regional Alliance Development Program authorizes local government units to issue bonds for the purpose of sharing in the costs and revenues connected with projects.

Governor Musgrove has been working on this issue for more than a year, along with representatives from the Mississippi Development Authority and Wade Jones from the East Mississippi Business Development Corporation. Governor Musgrove and Governor Riley discussed it at the National Governors Association meeting in Washington in February 2003. Bob Rohrlack and Neal Wade, director of the Alabama Development Office, have been conducting strategic discussions in recent weeks on this project.

*At first glance, it seems like Alabama would get the better end of the deal (with similar legislation, for example, and three automotive plants on board). Feedback?*

Both states bring tremendous assets to the table. Meridian and Lauderdale County are well-positioned to benefit from this alliance, due to the population and available skilled workforce, as well as their placement along Interstate 20.

Wade Jones and the members of the East Mississippi Business Development Corporation, along with other business leaders in Meridian and Lauderdale County, are also positioning the area for strong growth.

*If a potential project's a coin toss between the two states, what's the governors' game plan?*

Governor Musgrove's priority, as it always has been, is creating quality, high-paying jobs for the people of Mississippi. This alliance is a bold, aggressive step for Mississippi, and another demonstration of its commitment to achieving the state's promise and potential.

The Advantage Mississippi Initiative is one of the most aggressive economic development packages in the nation. Mississippi has gained recognition from "Site Selection" magazine, and has been listed as one of the top ten states in the nation for small business survival. In the January 2003 issue of "Expansion Management" magazine, four Mississippi cities were ranked in the 50 hottest American cities for expansion.

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.