

September 15, 2003

Letter to the Editor
Clarion Ledger

Dear Editor:

In the September 1st edition of your paper, I read with interest a guest column by Mr. Bill Chandler regarding our workforce dollars in Mississippi. I feel compelled to point out some inaccuracies outlined in the column and also to inform your readers about progress we have made in workforce issues.

Mr. Chandler's column states that there was over \$70 million unspent during 2001 and that our training programs were begging. He also states that \$43 million was unspent for 2002. This is simply not correct. Let me set the record straight.

Concerning the dollars that Mr. Chandler and others imply were lost by the state; I'd like to say once and for all that the dollars were spent as planned for commitments and obligations for multi-year training programs. What these erroneous statements do imply is an obvious total lack of understanding of our entire workforce training programs.

It was spent to set up and maintain a system of 60 WIN Job Centers across the state where any Mississippian can go to look for a better job and any business can find the workers it needs.

Be assured that these dollars were spent in Mississippi to put people to work in jobs that pay good wages and offer secure careers.

But more to the point, the WIA system in Mississippi is an accountable, result driven system.

In 2002, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) system had \$94 million available to provide employment and training services. For 2002, the WIA system spent \$78 million. The \$16 million balance will cover outstanding obligations and commitments carried over from 2002.

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In 2002 over 298,000 individuals visited Workforce Investment Act supported WIN Job Centers. Of that, 29,470 adults and dislocated workers received intensive WIA services and /or training. Some 8,264 youth received WIA employment, education, training, and support services.

We're here to put Mississippi to work, but we can only do this through a unified approach. It's always easier to sit back and criticize than it is to find solutions to problems. That's what we've been working tirelessly the last few years to do through programs like the Workforce Investment Network.

Sincerely,

Steve Hale
Executive Director

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