

The announcement was a welcome one: Nissan will be building its recognized best automobile in Canton, Mississippi.

Speaking at the expansion announcement last week, Nissan North America's Senior Vice President Emil Hassan commented that Nissan had "found a dynamic business climate here."

Those words, combined with the massive investment in the expansion, will be noted in the business community around the world. We are going to work as hard as possible to make sure the message isn't lost on anyone. And, we are going to work even harder to bring more job opportunities to Mississippi.

The numbers in the announcement are huge.

Nissan is going to invest another \$500 million above its initial investment of \$930 million, adding another 1,300 jobs and 1 million square feet to its facility in Canton. The expansion will accommodate the addition of the Altima sedan to the product line, and the annual production capacity will climb to 400,000 vehicles.

The demand for the Altima is so high, Nissan needed a place to build more. They could have expanded in Tennessee or another of their plants, but they decided to come here. The car that has been recognized as one of the best in the industry is going to be rolling off an assembly line here in Mississippi.

This project is now up to a total of 5,300 jobs and nearly \$1.5 billion from the plant alone. A study recently released by The Goodman Group at the University of Southern Mississippi determined that for every job created at the plant, another four jobs would be created in support industries.

Suppliers are already building around the state. Construction is underway in Vicksburg, Tupelo, Greenville and Forest, in addition to the buildings going up near the Nissan plant in Canton. We can count on growth in this area, as they expand to meet the new demands of the larger facility.

The study also found that by the year 2025, we'll realize a return of 207 percent on our investment.

A final comment made by the study drives the point home: "... the incentives to Nissan have been a very good investment for Mississippi."

On June 21, the Legislature agreed to another \$68 million incentive package for the Nissan expansion. Based on the study and the impact of Nissan's new investment, this was a wise and forward-thinking move.

Legislators responded to the call for a special session on this package quickly and with the knowledge that this investment was good for the entire state. Their decisive action helped solidify the decision by Nissan to grow in Mississippi.

We have been working hard together to both find and create opportunities in Mississippi, and this opportunity was a good one. I've always believed that opportunities are not lost; there will always be someone to take the ones we miss.

We weren't going to miss this opportunity. It means too much to our people and our future.