

Mississippi AFL-CIO Legislative Conference  
Wednesday, January 21, 2001  
9:30 a.m.  
Ramada Inn Southwest Conference Center

(Message: Many opportunities exist to make our state an even better place,  
we must prioritize and make things happen)

## **Opening**

- Good Morning
- (Thank Neal Fowler for his introduction)
- (Story about working at Habitat for Humanity house)

## **Main Points**

### 1. Opportunities

- a. Legislators talking “gloom and doom” for our state.
- b. You will not hear us whining and saying everything must stop.
- c. Don’t look at budget as an obstacle
  - i. Look for opportunities!
- d. Opportunity to prioritize:
  - i. Education
  - ii. Jobs
  - iii. Healthcare
- e. Opportunity to invest:
  - i. Invest in education for our kids
  - ii. Invest in good jobs for our people

- iii. Invest in health care for all of our people
- f. Give our people the opportunity for a better Quality of Life
- g. Invest – the money is there.
  - i. The key is prioritizing and investing that money in the right places.

- I am urging legislators to pass a bill to establish community service leave for state employees
- To encourage **Volunteerism**.
- This would provide more opportunities for Mississippians to have a better Quality of Life.
- Giving back to our communities.
- Volunteering is important
- Volunteering works!

2. Budget recommendations to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee

- a. We are taking a responsible approach to the slowdown in the economy by affecting a slowdown in budgeting and spending.
- b. Our budget reflects our people's priorities
  - i. Education
  - ii. Economic development
  - iii. Public safety
  - iv. Health care

- We want companies to locate in Mississippi and for them to prosper. We also want our people to prosper from these opportunities.

c. Economic development recommendations

- i. In order for MS to remain competitive, we must continue to support programs that give our people the opportunity for more, new, high-paying jobs.
- ii. We recommend 10 million more than the JLBC budget to maintain our momentum
- iii. **Nissan** is proof that we can succeed and attract more companies to MS.
- iv. They have shown their faith in our state.
  1. Top 1% investments in the nation
- v. Mississippi is the spotlight of the nation
  1. 4000 new jobs will be created with their arrival.
  2. 26,000 spin-off jobs
    - a. These jobs (opportunities) are here now.

- vi. Other companies related to Nissan will move to MS.
- vii. They will relocate all over the state, not just in Canton.
  - 1. Opportunities all over the state will spin-off from the Nissan plant.
  - 2. Supplier opportunities
    - a. Over 270,000 “hits” on the website
    - b. Over 4,500 supplier applications downloaded
    - c. Since Nov.9, 2000, over 959,000 people have visited the website.
    - d. A GREAT opportunity for all of Mississippi
- viii. We must target other companies that best suit specific areas of our state.
- ix. We must keep up the momentum
- x. We are happy to “land” Nissan, but we want more businesses to move to MS
- xi. We want more jobs, more economic development, more opportunities.
  - 1. We want to be in that “spotlight” again and again for the great things happening in Mississippi.

d. Education recommendations

- i. A strong education system is vital to all future successes for the people of our state.
  - ii. Our children and potential employees must be well educated.
  - iii. High tech companies want high tech employees
  - iv. Difference between JLBC and our budget:
    1. K-12 = \$45 million
    2. Comm. and Jr. = \$11.5 million
    3. IHL = \$23 million
- Last Spring we took the first step to our success by raising teacher pay
  - We must remove the **5% revenue growth condition**
  - Show our teachers we are committed to them, like they are committed to our children
  - The 5% provision is an excuse, not a commitment
  - We want results in MS, not excuses.

- I am urging Legislators to support administrative leave for **state employees attending parent-teacher conferences.**
- A parent's involvement in their child's education is vitally important.
- Teachers will tell you how important it is to have parents who are informed and involved in their child's education.
- A parent's involvement will have a direct effect on their child's advancement, behavior and grades in school.

e. Healthcare recommendations

- i. We must ensure that our people have access to health care options they need for themselves and their families
- ii. Our budget recommends 7 million more than the JLBC and we are fully funding the Division of Medicaid.
- iii. By working together in this process we are sharing:
  1. Ideas
  2. Priorities
  3. Solutions
- iv. I am also a State Employee.
- v. We have a plan of action

- vi. We must implement this plan to provide opportunities for all of our people.
- Everyone plays a role in our state's success. We all have to work together to succeed, make changes and create progress.
- We also have to concentrate on educating our children and training the current workforce
- The world is taking notice, and we must continue to spread the word about Mississippi.

## **Closing**

- Mississippi's Image: Important how our neighbors, our nation and the world view us.
- How Mississippi is perceived affects us in all aspects: economic development, education, healthcare, etc.
- We have the opportunity to promote a positive image.
- We put the spotlight on Mississippi throughout the nation and world with the Nissan announcement, but there are more opportunities waiting for us.
- A place where our children can live, work and raise their families.
- America's State of Promise