

1. Importance of raising teachers' salaries

Raising teacher pay to the southeastern average is the most critical issue facing the people of the state of Mississippi

a. Mississippi's children don't know all the folks in this room...but they got on buses today in every county and are working with dedicated teachers across this state today...getting ready to take on the world, to work hard as grown ups, to make a difference in our state....they're counting on us

b. Teachers who live in Mississippi, who make the choice to work over the state line because they can earn more...teachers like Paula O'Donegan, Dabra Eubanks, Carol Piece—these teachers are counting on us to do the right thing...to take teachers salaries to the SE average and then set higher goals

c. Business leaders looking to come to Mississippi or expand here are counting on us...Education as foundation of new, improved Economic Development Strategy

2. Current Plan

- a. Hard work of House members: Joe Warren, Billy McCoy
- b. Senate playing politics, but we're going to make sure we pay our teachers a professional salary
- c. At full implementation of the plan: \$30K = starting salary, \$50K = Masters Level with 25 years of experience, \$41K = average salary

3. The Process

a. Not Precedent Setting

(1) examples: not approved by the House Appropriations Committee

- SB 2219 (1997)—Gordon; Salaries of local officials, increase;
- HB 1604 (1997)—Stringer; Emerging Crops Fund; increase amount drawn for revolving loan fund for agribusiness programs; provide funds for boil weevil management;
- SB 2799 (1998)—White(5th); MS Board of Nursing Home Administrations; required to deposit monies received into State Treasury;
- SB 2694 (1998)—Posey; Wildlife; reallocate certain funds for fish hatchery; and,
- HB 1316 (1999)—Bourdeaux; Mississippi Prepaid Affordable College Tuition Program; revise various provisions

b. Strengthening Mississippi's budget

(1) Maximizing federal resources

- a. improved grantsmanship and soliciting discretionary dollars of the Cabinet Secretaries
- b. examples: Medicaid, North Carolina (\$207m)

(2) Private foundations: Maddox, Kellogg and Robert Wood Johnson

(3) The Governor's budget: Governor & staff working hard, sharing the load, leadership, innovation

(4) No tax increase

State Tax Commissioner Ed Buelow warned legislators against appropriating money that far into the future. "When the state is obligated to the future without knowing what the revenue is going to be – you can't operate that way," "I don't think there's a chance to obligate the money for teacher pay raises without a tax increase." Even though average growth over the last 17 years has been 6.1 percent, Buelow warned committee members that he thinks the estimated growth, set at more than 5 percent the next three years, may be too high.

4. Setting Priorities

- a. education at the top of the list
- b. Better schools = better jobs = better quality of life
- c. *Blake Wilson quote*
- d. Challenge the members of the House to get on board and put education first in Mississippi. The children of Mississippi deserve our best efforts to pass a teacher pay raise plan that will raise teacher pay to the Southeastern average.