

*Remarks for the
Crossroads Energy Center Luncheon
July 10, 2002*

Thank you, Brad. Today's ribbon cutting for the Crossroads Energy Center represents another great step forward in Mississippi's growth, and we are proud to welcome Aquila as partners in that growth and as new corporate citizens in our state.

The construction of projects like the Crossroads Energy Center are vitally important to our efforts to build the infrastructure of Mississippi, especially in more rural areas like the Delta region. With a strong infrastructure in place, we are more competitive in our work to attract new business and grow existing industries.

I'm proud of what we've been doing in the face of a national recession. The recent announcement of the \$500 million expansion of the Nissan plant, with its additional 1,300 jobs, is a strong illustration of our work to grow industry here in Mississippi.

We may not be able to control what's happening on Wall Street, but we can work as hard as possible to affect what happens on Main Street.

The work we do with Aquila is just as important as the work we do with a company like Nissan.

We've had great success in places like Monticello, Nettleton and Magnolia. We've helped businesses locate and expand in Greenwood and Prentiss. Whether it's 10 jobs or 1,000 jobs, the effort we put into building communities and towns benefits the entire state. And we are anticipating that Mississippians will make up 97 percent of the workforce for Nissan.

With the growth of this industry, we are seeing suppliers spread out across the state –

Vicksburg, Forest, Tupelo, Canton, and up into the Delta in Greenville – and they will keep coming.

That's why facilities like the Crossroads Energy Center are so important, because they are part of the foundation we rely on to help grow Mississippi.

And, this facility is especially important to our economic development, because of the nature of its work of meeting the increased power needs that come during the hot summer months. For those of you visiting the Delta area for the first time today, I'm sure you can understand the need for air conditioning.

I understand this center will be operating three to six months of the year, but as I mentioned before, we are working hard to attract new business and industry to the state. It's my hope and expectation that, at some point in time, we will see this plant operating year-round.

The jobs provided by this center mean so much to this area, but they mean more than just income and investment. They mean food on the table, clothes on the back and a roof over the head.

I'm proud of what we've been able to do with this project and the hundreds of other expansions in Mississippi, especially in the midst of a national recession. I'm also proud of the message this growth sends about the business climate in our state.

There's an old saying that "many an opportunity is lost because of time spent looking for four-leaf clovers."

We're not spending our time looking for four-leaf clovers. We'll leave that to somebody else.

There are too many opportunities for us to create on our own.

Brad, we are proud to have you in Mississippi and we look forward to working with you.

Thank you all for being here today.