

*Remarks for the
Batesville WIN Job Center Open House
July 25, 2002*

Thank you, George. (*recognize other dignitaries – Curt Thompson, MESC Executive Director; Roger Givens, MESC Employment Service Director; Cindy Martin, Batesville WIN Job Center; Clarence Thompson, MESC Area Supervisor*)

It is great to be here with the men and women who help build Mississippi each and every day. Thank you for the work you do – and for the commitment we all share to helping Mississippi reach its full promise and potential.

In my State of the State address last January, I laid out four priorities for our state – jobs, education, health care and public safety. All very different priorities, but all dependent on each other for our ultimate success.

And, the cooperation and partnerships we build together will help determine our success in putting these priorities into action.

Look at the recent Nissan expansion – an expansion of their facility in Canton by 1 million square feet and 1,300 jobs to accommodate the production of the Altima sedan.

This \$500 million investment is being made because Nissan wants to build their best car in their best plant.

The ripple effect from this expansion will be felt around the state.

An economic impact study on the first phase of the Nissan project, conducted by the Goodman Group at USM, found that for every job at the Nissan plant, four more will be created in support areas.

With Nissan's Tier 1 suppliers locating around the state – construction is already underway in Vicksburg, Forest, Tupelo, Canton and Greenville – the impact of this expansion will be felt in many communities around the state.

And, as the other support facilities begin to move in, even more jobs will be created – jobs that will help put 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."

Not here. We're always looking for opportunities and, in the times when we don't see them, we're creating them. That's how we're moving Mississippi ahead.

For all the publicity surrounding the Nissan project, however, the expansion of jobs around the state has been occurring on a regular basis. We've been creating jobs in the midst of a national recession, something that we can look to with pride.

We may not be able to control what's happening on Wall Street in New York, but we can work as hard as possible to affect what happens on Highway 6 in Batesville. The work we do with a small business is just as important as the work we do with a company like Nissan.

And much of that work happens at the local level. The WIN Job Centers are the places where the rubber meets the road – you are on the front lines of the fight for jobs, and I know this center we dedicate today will set the standard for others to follow.

This is a special event today. This is a positive reflection on how state, county and business officials can work together on solutions that will benefit this area and its communities.

We have taken several measures to help communities and people in the area who have been affected by plant closings and lay offs.

Since the inception of the Workforce Investment Network, or WIN, in Mississippi, many of our citizens and businesses have taken advantage of the programs and services offered by the local WIN Job Centers.

More and more people are realizing that the one-stop concept of these centers is part of how we can offer a high-quality workforce.

The WIN in Mississippi program is facing and overcoming new challenges in meeting the needs of communities hit hard by plant closings. Now, laid-off workers have a WIN Job Center dedicated to easing the impact of unemployment and committed to helping them with services, skills training and other programs to help them get back to work.

Within this one center, job-seekers will find representatives from many partners and programs, including:

- The Mississippi Employment Security Commission, who can help with unemployment insurance and provide information on trade-related assistance and the Trade Adjustment Act;

- Vocational Rehabilitation options;
- Jones Junior College career and training counselors;
- An extensive computer center with Internet connection for job searches and posting resumes;
- Classes on resume writing and interviewing techniques;
- Skills assessment and career goals guidance;
- On-the-job and skills training programs.

I have a strong interest in the work of this particular WIN Job Center. I grew up in a suburb of Batesville. I lived and worked here, and I represented this area as a state senator. I want to see it live up to its full potential.

This center can help make that happen. The success of our state – the success of our people – is determined by the network of minds and manpower we develop, both here in Batesville and all around Mississippi. You are at the core of that network, and the work you're going to do here helps keep it strong.

Earlier, I mentioned the saying about four-leaf clovers. The bottom line is this: 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.

I appreciate the work you do each day to create those opportunities, and I look forward to working with you to keep building our great state of Mississippi. Thank you.