

*Remarks for the  
Budget Press Conference  
February 17, 2003*

- Realities of national recession affecting every state
  - Revenue collections down
  - Trillions lost in stock market / over a million Americans out of work
  - Many states being forced to take drastic action
    - Cuts in school days
    - Prisoners released
    - State employees laid off
  
- MS is doing better than many other states
  - Investing in our people and potential
  - Funding education first / strong foundation for future

- As governor, have responsibility to develop policies that protect in the short term and prepare for the long term
  - One of the ways we've done that is through 5% holdback in agency budgets
  - This action has helped anticipate lower revenues for past two years
  - Sound fiscal management for Mississippi
  
- Economic conditions have required budget adjustments or cuts during this current fiscal year
  - Today announcing additional cut in spending
  - This should be the last of the 2003 fiscal year

- \$33 million from non-education agencies
  - Also transferring \$16 million out of rainy day fund to general fund
  - Total 4% cut for current fiscal year
    - This illustrates need for 5% holdback
  
- Important to note that not a single education budget is being cut
  - In fact, those who held back 5% will have 55% of total budget to spend for last six months of 2003 fiscal year
  - That's how we protect in the short term while preparing for the long term
  
- Also important to point out that rainy day fund still has balance of \$101 million

- I have a responsibility to every Mississippi citizen
  - That responsibility means making tough decisions
  - That responsibility includes balancing a budget
  - It's a responsibility I take seriously
  
- As I've said before, we can do the work we need to do without raising taxes
  - It's a matter of setting priorities
  - We've shown it can be done

- Two weeks ago, signed education funding bills into law
  - I said education should be a priority / we funded it like one
    - We did it to help our children
    - We did it to help the next generation and the ones to follow
    - We did it for all Mississippians