

*Remarks for the
"Celebration on the Hill" Bus Stop
May 21, 2002*

Good afternoon. It is great to be here with you today, to work with you to help in the fight against a disease that we all have been touched by at some time or another. Whether it's a friend or a family member, cancer has impacted all our lives in some way.

We are trying to get the message out about good health around the state. We're all too aware of how we tend to lead the nation in what has been termed the "worst firsts." It's time to change that, and we're working hard to do it.

When I unveiled my health care plan last year, I called for the inclusion of screenings for breast and cervical cancer. Now, this is part of our efforts to reform and restructure the Medicaid program. We have to address these issues and offer people access to the tests that will catch this deadly disease in time.

We are doing so much to improve the lives of Mississippians in terms of education, economic development and technology. All of these, however, cannot succeed without a healthy population. That's the challenge for us today.

We hear all the talk about eating right, exercising, and avoiding destructive habits such as alcohol and tobacco. And in the South, there is a culture that has been raised on blue-plate specials, where the only exercise has been hard work.

Mississippi is poised to do great things. States around the country are taking notice of what's happening here, and we are emerging as a leader among our neighbors. But, at the end of the day, our greatest resource is our people. And if we are to reach our potential, we need healthy people.

Let's make that potential a reality. Let's work together for our families, our state, our future.

I want to thank the American Cancer Society for the tremendous work they do here in Mississippi, and for their efforts here today. Together, let's get the word out and build a healthy Mississippi.

Thank you.