

*Remarks for the
Delta Ag Expo
January 21, 2003*

- Recognize Don Respass

- It's been a tough year for agriculture in MS
 - Weather hasn't helped crop yields
 - Heavy rains delayed harvests
 - Natural disasters affecting crops all over the State of Mississippi

- Have been working with USDA / FEMA to get assistance
 - Want to make sure help is available

- With agriculture as number one industry in the State of Mississippi
 - More than \$4 billion industry
 - Need to keep it healthy

- Agriculture especially important during national recession
 - More than \$7 trillion lost in stock market
 - More than a million American out of work
 - States cutting school week / releasing prisoners / massive lay-offs

- Effects of national recession hit the just and the unjust
 - Recession has no respect for political parties
 - Every state affected

- Have to deal with the impact here in MS
 - Protect people in short term / prepare for long term

- Best way to do that is through education
 - Everybody benefits from good schools

- Comprehensive plan for education
 - Teacher pay
 - Test scores
 - Computers in Classroom

- Investments in education benefit every Mississippian, not just students
 - People want to live in good communities
 - Good schools, good jobs, good communities

- Have called on Legislature to fund education in one comprehensive bill
 - Fund it at 62 percent of general fund
 - Time to prove to you that when it comes to education, we mean business
 - Business means jobs

- Have continued to create quality jobs during national recession
 - Nearly 50,000 new jobs in past three years / \$13.5 billion invested

- Building jobs across the spectrum
 - Nissan = \$1.5 billion investment / more than 5,000 direct jobs
 - MS also one of top 10 states for small business survival

- We have the right policies and programs in place to attract business / grow MS
 - Economic development is economic development
 - 2 people in a truck or 5,000 building a truck

- Have to create opportunities across the board
 - Rural areas hit hardest by NAFTA
 - Have to be smart and aggressive in creating jobs

- That's the driving force behind MS Rural Economic Impact Authority
 - Assistance to new and existing business
 - Training for people who have lost jobs

- Great potential for agriculture industry under this initiative
 - Important to keep this industry strong for MS / her people

- Thank you for work you do to literally help grow MS
 - We're better for it