

Delta Council Annual Meeting
Friday, May 26, 2000
Delta State University – Walter Sillers Coliseum
10:30 a.m.

You need to be strong in your statements and with any gestures you might make.

Opening

- 1) Thank you for the introduction and the kind reception
- 2) Appreciate the invitation to attend
- 3) Opening story

Main Points

- 1) Education – Raising Teacher Pay to the Southeastern average is the most critical issue facing the people of the State of Mississippi.
 - a. Education is the key to better economic Development in our state.
 - b. We must be able to keep good teachers in the classroom and recruit students into the field of teaching.
 - c. We are going to make the pay raises happen- despite 5%
 - d. We must have strong schools that have the best teachers educating the children of our state to enter the job market.
 - e. Better education = Better jobs.
- 2) Economic Plan for the State
 - a. Old plan was stale
 - i. Not competitive with other states
 - ii. No longer offers the incentives that business and industry is looking for.
 - b. Time for a new plan
 - i. New incentives
 - ii. Being written by the Mississippi Partnership for Economic Development – first ever public/private partnership – Dwight Evans
 - iii. Comprehensive-statewide effort
- 3) Delta is falling behind other parts of the state.
 - a. Mississippi must be strong and prepared for economic development in every corner of our state.
 - b. If any portion or region of our state is faltering, then we all suffer.
 - c. While much of our nation and our state have experienced growth over the last decade, many Delta communities have not participated fully in our newly found prosperity.

- d. The Delta is facing critical needs in the areas of education, water and sewer needs, job creation, job retention, healthcare, infrastructure and a strong workforce.
 - e. These are not the subjects for year after year of patchwork programs that provide only temporary fixes.
 - f. Our people deserve long-term solutions based on responsible, long-range planning.
 - g. It is time for us to come together and work as one to bring the Mississippi Delta up to equal footing with the rest of our state.
- 4) Delta Regional Authority
- a. Based on the Appalachian Regional Commission
 - i. Created over 30 years ago to address the chronic economic depression and poverty that existed in that region of the nation.
 - ii. Successful
 - iii. If it worked for the Appalachian Regional Commission, why couldn't it work for the Delta?
 - b. With this Authority, we are taking action to make improvements that will make a difference in the quality of life available to the people who live, work and raise their families in the Delta.
 - c. Creates a culture that is ripe for growth.
 - d. This is an opportunity for us to make things right in the delta.
 - e. The Authority is an effort that is well thought out and is accountable
 - f. It would be easy to stand on the sidelines and let everyone else make the decisions
 - g. Must step forward and provide the leadership that steers the direction that we take for the people of the Delta
 - h. What is good for the Delta is good for the entire state of Mississippi

Closing

We have been told for so long that we rank 50th that many people have come to believe that. I don't believe that. We must change our image both internally and externally. If the people of our state believe that we are in last place, then what does the rest of the nation believe.

We are a state that is rich in history and culture, and we are working side by side to make changes that positively affect the people of our state. We are responsible for creating a future that is rich with excellent educational opportunities, economic growth, competitive paying jobs, and solid healthcare, and I am committed to doing just that.

I cannot do it alone. We need your help and we need the help of every Mississippian to make our state strong, viable and ready for growth and prosperity.

Thank you.