

*Remarks for the
Domestic Violence Press Conference
March 20, 2002*

Good morning. Today, I'm here to formally announce that I have signed Senate Bill 2409, dealing with the issue of domestic violence.

Too many Mississippians have faced the tragedy of domestic violence; too many lives have been affected, too many lives destroyed. Families have suffered.

As authored by Senator Neely Carlton, this new law offers new avenues of protection for victims of domestic violence by requiring protective orders to contain specifics as to the nature of the violence.

Further, it provides protection by giving legal authority for residents and staff of domestic violence shelters to provide only a post office box as a legal address when dealing with public or private agencies.

I signed this bill because no person – regardless of age, income, race, religion, or education – should ever have to suffer the pain of domestic violence.

Senator Carlton has another bill pending – Senate Bill 2460 – that revises the arrest requirements in domestic violence cases.

This legislation helps to identify the “most significant” aggressor in a domestic violence case, thus offering better protection for those least able to defend themselves.

I urge the Legislature to send this bill to my desk as soon as possible for my signature.

One other piece of legislation needs to be mentioned as well – Senate Bill 2603, as authored by Senator Gloria Williamson, provides for an aggravated factor in sentencing for domestic assault. If domestic violence occurs in the presence or hearing of a child under the age of 16, this factor will be taken into account.

I'm proud to say this bill has also been signed into law.

In my State of the State address, I outlined four basic priorities – jobs, education, health care and safety. These bills fall within that last priority – I want all Mississippians to feel safe; and this legislation helps make it happen.

I thank Senators Carlton and Williamson for their commitment to protecting the victims of domestic violence.

At this time, I'd like to ask Michele Carroll, Executive Director of the Mississippi Coalition against Domestic Violence, to say a few words, and then we'll be glad to take any questions. Michele?

(Michele speaks; after she speaks, you may offer the podium to Senators Carlton and Williamson for remarks)

