

*Remarks for the
East Mississippi Business Development Corporation
January 31, 2002*

Good morning. Wade, thank you for the invitation to be here with all of you this morning.

I applaud the effort to bring everyone here together with a common goal and a common purpose – working for success in economic development.

In my budget presentation last week, I outlined four major priorities: Jobs, education, health care and public safety.

You'll notice I said "jobs" first. I wasn't keeping time by my watch, but there are some in the media who tell me I spent 17 minutes in my 40-minute State of the State speech talking about jobs.

In the face of national recession, we're doing some great work in Mississippi. We've created over 21,000 jobs across the state, and brought in over \$6.5 billion in new investments.

But, as you know, we still have challenges ahead of us. One of them is just below Meridian in Clarke County, with the Burlington factory in Stonewall.

As soon as we heard about the plant closing at the end of March, we sent in the Rapid Response Team from the Mississippi Development Authority. These professionals go in to work with both employers and employees.

They help make the transition easier, help with worker training and job placement, and make a difficult process work a little easier.

It is important for us to work just as hard at keeping companies in Mississippi as we do in bringing new companies. When a business closes, it affects a community in so many ways.

MDA, with Bob Rohrlack, is committed to the vision I have laid out for Mississippi – a vision of a state that is seen as a leader in economic development, a leader in technology, and a leader in education.

We're making that vision a reality.

It's going to take a lot of hard work from a lot of committed and dedicated individuals. It's going to take a lot of hard work from you.

I know that your work here involves study of Stephen Covey's "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People."

As I understand them, habits 4, 5 and 6 deal with teamwork, cooperation and communications.

Those are three very important factors in whether or not we succeed in our work.

We've got to work together, we've got to cooperate, and we've got to have a shared vision of what we want for Mississippi and her people.

I know you believe in these habits. I know I do. They are essential to our future.

I'm excited about the potential for what you're doing here and how it can affect our work in east central Mississippi. I'm excited about the work being done in Philadelphia and Meridian and other communities in this part of our state.

Good things are happening, and they're happening because we have a strong commitment to reaching the goals we've set for ourselves.

Thank you.

