

*Remarks for the  
Earth Lab Eco-House Dedication and Unveiling  
April 22, 2002*

Bishop Marble, thank you for that kind introduction. I am glad to be here this morning to be a part of the dedication and unveiling of the Eco-House.

This house will show students a new way to live and a new way to learn, and that's important for Mississippi.

In my State of the State address, I outlined four priorities for Mississippi – education, jobs, health care and public safety.

I'm proud to say we found some common ground on those issues during the 2002 session, especially regarding education.

First and foremost, we are implementing a teacher pay raise that will lift the average salary in Mississippi from 49<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> in the nation.

We fought back a reduction in funding to the Adequate Education Program and were able to hold it at the current year level.

And, we provided money for textbooks and classroom supplies, so teachers won't be forced to pay for them out of their own pockets.

These are investments in education, and they are indicative of our commitment to the young people of this state. I know Bill Nickle and everyone associated with The Earth Lab and this project share that commitment as well.

We're working hard to give our children and future generations every opportunity, every tool to help them succeed. The Eco-House will be a useful tool in our efforts.

The young people of Mississippi are committed and dedicated to their futures.

We have to share that same commitment and dedication. We owe that to them.

It will be exciting to watch the children who visit the Eco-House get fired up about learning, and to know that one day, they will have that same passion for whatever career they choose.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, a Greek philosopher said that education is the foundation of our state. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, that statement still holds true.

We're going to put down the strongest foundation we can, and build a strong and prosperous future on that foundation.

We're dedicating part of that foundation today. At a time when we focus a great deal on technology, it is important to remember the wealth of natural resources we have and our obligation to make the best possible use of them.

That's the role of the Eco-House. Children from all over our state will come here to learn how we can make the most of the gifts of nature, and still leave nature whole.

There's a Native American proverb that says, "we do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children." That's a lesson I hope will be taught here.

I am an avid outdoorsman. I enjoy hunting, I enjoy fishing, I enjoy the beauty of the nature found in Mississippi. How we teach our children to respect that nature will determine whether or not future generations can have the same experiences.

I wish you the best of luck with the Eco-House. It will be an example for us all of our obligation to give back to the earth, and a lesson for generations to come.

Thank you.