

*Remarks for the
Mississippi Faith Summit
April 25, 2002*

Good afternoon. I appreciate the opportunity to be here with you today, as you look at new ways and new strategies for improving communities in Mississippi.

I believe Mississippi is going through a revival – in its commitment to making the most of the promise of *all* its people, in all areas of the state.

That revival begins with how we care for one another. It begins with how we focus our efforts on health care, on education, on jobs that put food on the table and roofs over our heads.

If we are going to be successful in that revival, we have to set priorities for how we want to reach our goals and achieve our dreams.

I've always believed that God makes our dreams a size too big so we can grow into them. Mississippi is growing; we're growing fast and we're growing together.

I believe we are far beyond the Mississippi that most people think of; we are a Mississippi that shares a common belief and a common commitment to the worth of all people.

We're moving beyond issues like race and focusing on issues like education, health care and economic development.

There are 2.8 million people in Mississippi who look to me and other elected officials to help provide leadership, direction and guidance for them.

Those people were first and foremost in my mind and in my efforts to protect Medicaid in recent weeks. The 650,000 Mississippians who depend on this vital health care program need to know it will be there for them.

They are the reason I fought to make sure we could get the flexibility we needed to manage the program efficiently and effectively, and still provide quality health care services.

The flexibility to manage demands the flexibility to commit to medical services when they are needed, and I will not be satisfied until I know the people of this state can receive health care when they need it.

I asked for flexibility, and today it is here. This is the first step toward ensuring quality health care – as well as some peace of mind – for those 650,000 Mississippians who expect me to help them.

I pray every day for the strength and the wisdom to do this job, a job that I love. I would ask for your prayers as well – not just for myself, but for all in public service – that we might do work that serves our people and serves God.

That work includes doing everything we can to come together not just as Mississippians but as creations of God – made in His image, and blessed by His grace.

We can do this. It's happening right now.
It's helping make a better, stronger, healthier
Mississippi – and I'm thankful for it.

God bless you, and may God bless
Mississippi and America.