

- lead-in with hunting stories, story of Jordan and 15-point buck

It's all about priorities. It's about the priorities of managing our resources, of being able to walk out into the beautiful Mississippi woods and enjoy the hunt, of the right to bear arms as responsible sportsmen, and yes, it's about the priority of saving a trophy buck.

Mississippi is blessed with incredible resources – vast forests; over 800,000 acres of prime game areas; and 38 Wildlife Management Areas. We have one of the largest populations of white-tail deer in the nation. Hunters come from across the country for turkey and duck hunts.

I'm proud of the work we've done to maintain hunting in Mississippi as one of the great sports. Wherever you are in the world, you can log onto the Internet and apply on-line for a hunting or fishing license in Mississippi. We have the best conservation officers in the country helping to manage our wildlife populations and keep hunting safe for everyone.

And most importantly, we're protecting the rights of hunters. Our founding fathers were very clear when they wrote the 2nd amendment – “the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.” I believe in and support that right.

Last December, I signed tort reform legislation into law that included language defending this right, language that limits the authority to sue gun manufacturers, distributors and dealers. I grew up hunting, I grew up with guns, and I will fight any attempt to infringe on our 2nd amendment rights.

Again, it's all about priorities – priorities focused on protecting our rights and our resources, on improving education for our children, on creating quality jobs for all Mississippians. It's about building good schools, good jobs and good communities.

We're all familiar with the story of Teddy Roosevelt and his bear-hunting venture over in Sharkey County. He was a great hunter, but he wouldn't take the shot at a small bear that had been caught. He was, like many of us, interested in the thrill of the chase. As he said once, “the chase is among the best of all national pastimes.”

It's a good thing the chase is a popular national pastime, because the rest of the country is trying to keep up with Mississippi these days.

The chase is on in Mississippi – for the opportunities, for better schools and better jobs for our people, for the future. There may be limits in hunting, but there are no limits on our potential.