

*Remarks for the
Special Session Press Conference
July 25, 2002*

Good morning. Doing business in Mississippi today is better than ever, and the numbers prove it. In the face of a national recession, during a time of uncertainty on Wall Street, we have created thousands of new jobs, the majority of which came through the expansion of existing industries.

When we invest in economic development, we invest in our people.

It's time for us to make that investment again.

I am calling the Mississippi Legislature into a special session on Tuesday, July 30, to support the expansion of one of Mississippi's largest home-grown companies.

Howard Industries, based in Laurel, operates with four main companies – Howard Transformer Division, Howard Computers, Howard Ballast Products Division, and Howard Transportation. *In business for 30 years, the company had sales last year of more than \$450 million.* They employ more than 3,500 Mississippians with a payroll of \$90 million.

This is a well-established, well-known Mississippi business – and their roots in this state run deep.

This expansion carries a commitment of 2,000 new quality and high-paying jobs – jobs that mean an improvement in the quality of life for families in south Mississippi.

The expansion will be aided by an investment of \$31.5 million from the state – an investment dedicated to creating jobs and opportunity for the people of Mississippi.

When the Advantage Mississippi Initiative was developed two years ago, we specifically focused on access and growth of technology. Howard Industries is a textbook case for Advantage Mississippi.

As one of the leading manufacturers in the nation, Howard Industries quietly – but effectively – impacts the global marketplace, exporting to over 150 countries. Their growth in Mississippi should be supported by Mississippi. Our commitment to Howard Industries is another indicator to the rest of the world that we can compete at any level.

The work we will do on July 30 may not affect what happens on Wall Street in New York.

More importantly, it will affect what happens on Sawmill Road in Laurel – and every street where the employees – and future employees – of Howard Industries live.

I want to thank Lt. Governor Tuck, Speaker Ford, and the members of the Legislature for their help and support for economic development projects and the growth of jobs for the people of Mississippi.

(open floor for questions)