

*Remarks to the  
Jackson Rotary Club  
August 27, 2001*

Good morning, and thank you, Don, for your invitation to be here with you today. I appreciate the opportunity to visit with you about the great things happening in Mississippi.

As governor, I spend a good bit of time talking with people about our state, and it's always interesting to hear their opinions.

*(perhaps tell story about recent flight to Washington)*

I was told that, in my remarks today, you would be interested in what we're doing in the area of economic development – without talking about a certain auto plant being built just north of here.

Now, there may be those who think this could be difficult – but in reality it is very easy to talk about what's happening in Mississippi besides a certain auto plant being built just north of here.

So, I'm not going to mention a certain auto plant being built just north of here. Instead, I'm going to tell you some other success stories in Mississippi. They may not get as much press as a certain auto plant, but they are just as important.

Let me start by going back one year, to August of 2000. In a special session, the legislature overwhelmingly passed the Advantage Mississippi Initiative – and the way business is done in Mississippi changed.

This initiative created a number of new programs and incentives, all designed to help the state retain existing industry and attract new industry.

For example, the Advantage Jobs program offers incentives to companies who bring quality jobs to Mississippi. But, in order to qualify, a business is required to pay an annual salary of 125 percent of the state or county average, provide a health plan, and supply a specific minimum number of jobs.

The end result is new industry, new jobs,  
and new revenue for the state.

Advantage Mississippi created eight  
regional offices to assist in better service to  
rural communities. With these offices in  
place, we are better positioned to attract  
industry to areas that before may never have  
had a chance to compete.

Advantage Mississippi established the Mississippi World Trade Center, chartered by the World Trade Center Association, to strengthen our position in the global arena.

As many of you know, today's marketplace is quite different from what our fathers were used to. Today, we compete in a marketplace that is borderless, wireless, and global – and the key word here is “compete.”

That's what we're doing in Mississippi.

Listen to what we did in fiscal year 2001, the year just ended. In that year, there were 195 new business locations announced throughout the state. Nearly 12,000 new jobs were created, with an investment of over \$2.5 billion.

Now, those numbers did include a certain auto plant being built just north of here. But let me take that plant out and let's see what remains – 194 new business locations, almost 8,000 new jobs, and over \$1.5 billion invested in Mississippi.

That's good news.

As part of our effort to compete in the global marketplace I mentioned earlier, we have built a network of foreign offices to support the growth of Mississippi exports.



Today, we have offices in Santiago, Chile; London; Singapore; and Yokohama, Japan. Through their support of our products and services, Mississippi companies are reaping the benefit.

Last year, these offices generated nearly 2,000 trade leads, as well as providing 185 foreign clients with on-site assistance here in the state.

But, not every economic development success story has to have investments in the billions and thousands of new jobs. Just ask Charley Dumas, the mayor of Prentiss, Mississippi.

He's got a new business there in town, a business based out of Michigan, that re-engineers cellular phones. The jobs, about 140 of them, don't call for unskilled labor, and start at about \$8.50 per hour. The technicians can make as much as \$21 per hour.

For Prentiss, Mississippi, that's a major step in the right direction.

I was in Ripley, Mississippi, last week for our first "Capital for a Day" program.

While I was there, I went to a press conference announcing the expansion of a business in Ripley.

The business is called EcoWater Systems, and they are the largest manufacturer of water treatment systems in the world. They make the filter systems that many of us have on our kitchen sinks at home.

Their manufacturing plant in Ripley is one of only two plants they have in the world. Keep in mind they are the largest manufacturer in the world.

What great news for small Ripley, way up north in Tippah County.

One week ago today, I traveled around the state promoting our newest innovation in worker training and employer recruitment. The Workforce Investment Network, or WIN, as we call it, has established six Job Centers around the state.

These centers provide “one-stop” shopping for both employers and hopeful employees. People looking for work can get information from the internet and from staff, and they also have access to an array of job training opportunities.

Employers have a central location where they can post job openings, interview potential employees, and recruit for expanding businesses.

We are also taking an aggressive role in setting up job fairs in areas where businesses may have moved away. Just this past June, we held one in Jackson County, which has had some of its businesses move out recently.

Over 5,000 people went to that job fair. More than 1,000 job interviews were held on-site, and nearly 600 people went home with jobs that day.

It's estimated that another 950 people will get jobs based on their applications and interviews from the job fair.

There are great things happening in Mississippi, and it's making a difference.

I know my time is limited here today, but I want to mention a couple of other areas that are just as important to our economic growth.



Last month we made a commitment to Mississippi's teachers and children by removing a five percent provision on teacher pay. Now, we are poised to move from 49<sup>th</sup> in the nation to 19<sup>th</sup> in the nation over the next few years.

In fact, the day after that special session, the New York Times ran an editorial that stated that with a sparse economy and fewer resources, Mississippi had crafted a package that New York still couldn't match.

That's good for economic development.

I have also proposed using a portion of our annual tobacco payments – not the principal in the trust fund, but a portion of the payments – to maximize federal matching dollars for health care.

We have the opportunity to capture over \$400 million in federal funds to use for the health care needs of the people of Mississippi.

That's good for economic development.

I'm excited about what's happening here.

We have done, and we are now doing, great things in economic development – and I never even had to mention the auto plant being built just north of here.

Thank you.