

*Remarks for the
Mississippi Association for Community Education
(MACE)
June 21, 2003*

- Recognize Rep. Ed Blackmon

- Thank Cornelius Jones and MACE for hosting
summits on workforce development
 - Strengthening workforce strengthens
Mississippi
 - That's good for all of us

- Your good work is part of the reason that
Mississippi is taking on a different image
 - Image of a state moving faster than anyone
else into the 21st century
 - A state that's competing and leading in the
global marketplace
 - A state that's setting new standards in
education and economic development

- Impact of national recession
 - More than \$7 trillion lost in stock market
 - Bureau of Labor Statistics: 9 million Americans out of work
 - States cutting school week / Arkansas considering releasing prisoners and cutting services/ Alabama is raising taxes
 - We have refused to follow suit

- We have achieved this by setting priorities and **cutting the fat out of state government**
 - National recession is a reality and we must live within our means
 - Rockefeller Institute: National recession is key reason for declining state revenues

- Have to protect people in the short term while preparing for the long term
 - Best way to do that is through investing in education and creating jobs

- Education is our **top** priority /
 - Public schools are the cornerstones of our communities and key to a successful economy

- Over the past three years Mississippi's educational achievements have affected schools statewide.
 - From Desoto to the Delta, from Clarksdale to the Coast, from Alcorn County to Yazoo City and everywhere in between we're improving education for all of our children
 - Teacher pay / 49th to 19th when fully implemented
 - "No Child Left Behind" / 6th in nation to have plan approved
 - 12th in the nation for educational accountability
 - Computers in Classroom
 - In 2002 number of schools identified as "needing improvement" by the federal government decreased 90% -- from 122 to only 11

- Increasing investment while others are cutting
 - That is significant in light of national recession
 - Demonstrates our priority / our commitment

- Education is our **top** priority
 - Because good schools bring good jobs and build great communities
 - We are already reaping the benefits of this

- No longer a state that depends solely on agriculture / low wage jobs
 - We are aggressive about creating quality, high-paying jobs for our people

- Strong growth over past 3 years
 - 2,103 new and expanded facilities
 - More than 50,000 new jobs
 - Total business investment in Mississippi of \$14.1 billion

- We're always working to make these numbers climb even higher

- Investments in infrastructures of communities around the state
 - Companies want good transportation, energy, technical resources

- Workforce Investment Network / Job Centers
 - Offers employers and job-seekers one place to meet
 - Job training available to meet needs of businesses

- Passage of Mississippi Rural Economic Impact Authority
 - \$10 million to aid economic development in rural areas
 - Funding to cover workforce training at community colleges

- Late last month, awarded first grant under this program to City of Tylertown
 - \$245,300 grant to renovate a building housing two businesses
 - Grant will keep businesses in Tylertown and help them expand

- That's the type of result I wanted when I proposed this program
 - We're going to see more results like this around the state

- We've been creating, and will continue to create, quality, high-paying jobs
 - Our people have the talent and the skill

- We've made tremendous progress for our state over the past three years
 - More work to be done / appreciate your help in making it happen
 - Your input is valuable

- We're looking to the future of MS / where do we want to go?
 - Good schools / good jobs / good communities

- The image of the Mississippi of 2003 is unlike anything anyone could have dreamed
 - It's an image of people working in highly-skilled, well-paying jobs
 - It's an image of children in classrooms equipped with the technology to bring the world to their desk
 - It's an image of global companies looking for a place to do business in the state

- Thank you for the role you've played in making that dream a reality
 - And thank you for your continuing role striving to take it even further