

*Remarks for the
Mississippi Association of School Superintendents Luncheon
July 10, 2003*

- Thank David Sheppard
 - Thank MASS for Service Award
 - Honored / flattered by this recognition

- Good schools bring good jobs, and build great communities.
 - This has been my philosophy during my entire career of public service to Mississippi
 - It is the driving force behind my commitment to education

- Over the past three years I have worked to make education our **top priority**.
 - We have brought national recognition to our achievements in public education

- This year when crafting the state budget I challenged the legislature to **invest in education first**, and we did just that
 - Never again will our children have to compete with prisons and convicted felons for funding
 - First and only state to have a **computer with internet** access in **every classroom**
 - Princeton Review: **12th best testing** system in the nation

- It is **important to invest in education**, but like any investment we must **make sure that investment is sound** and safe.
 - Our **educational accountability** system is **12th** in the nation
 - First southern state to receive federal accountability approval for President Bush's **No Child Left Behind Act** / one of the first in the nation
 - It's not surprising
 - In 2002 the Number of **schools** cited as **“needing improvement”** by the federal government **declined 90%** -
- from 122 to only 11

- We are proud of the achievements we have made in education

- Want to also thank you for commitment to working with Adjutant General Lipscomb and the MS National Guard
 - As Commander in Chief, appreciate the strong relationship between our schools and the guard
 - Recruiters have been working in the schools and the results are strong

- The number of recruits coming directly from high school into the Guard has increased by 20 percent over the past three years
 - That's good for our students / good for the Guard / good for Mississippi

■ The partnership between our schools and the Guard has made a great difference in our overall recruiting efforts

- This was a big concern when I took office
- No net gain in recruits for 9 years straight

■ Membership in the Guard has increased from 9,200 to 9,800 over the past three years, and we are working to raise that number to 10,000 by this October

- For the last six months, Mississippi has led the nation in recruiting
- Thank you for your help in making that happen

- Mississippi has come a long way in the last three and a half years,
 - We have even bigger plans for the next four years
 - I want to make sure our schools perform at their best
 - Not only because I am Governor, but because my children are sitting in our public schools right next to yours

- Clifton Taulbert story / dusty road
 - In the end, all our work is focused on the future of Mississippi and one simple question
 - What do we want?
 - Good schools / good jobs / good communities