

*Remarks for the  
MS Association of Governmental Purchasing and Property Agents  
October 22, 2002*

*(recognize Dwight Pugh / Lori Rutland /  
Sharion Smith)*

*(story of Jordan / 15-point buck / priorities)*

Mississippi is going through a revival – in its commitment to making the most of the promise of *all* its people, in all areas of the state.

That revival begins with how we care for one another. It begins with how we focus our efforts on health care, on education, on jobs that put food on the table and roofs over our heads.

Now, more than ever, we are using technology to help those things happen.

If we are going to be successful in that revival, we have to set priorities for how we want to reach our goals and achieve our dreams.

I've always believed that God makes our dreams a size too big so we can grow into them.

Mississippi is growing; we're growing fast and we're growing together.

I believe we are far beyond the Mississippi that most people think of; we are a Mississippi that shares a common belief and a common commitment to the worth of all people.

We're doing great work for the state of Mississippi. Great things are happening in our state.

We are capturing the attention of the world outside our borders because of the exciting things we've got going on, and I'm sure you will agree that it's good for Mississippi to be recognized for being on the cutting edge.

We're on the cutting edge in education.

We're on track to place an Internet-accessible computer in every public school classroom, a goal we'll meet by the end of this year.

We are going to ensure that our children are ready to compete in the economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, an economy that will be global, borderless and wireless.

Now, combine this with our commitment to pay teachers like the professionals they are.

With a strong foundation in education, we can focus on the business of building jobs.

Mississippi is growing like never before. In the past two years, during a national recession, we've created more than 36,000 new jobs – over 17,000 of them have been through the expansion of existing industries.

The Small Business Survival Committee recently listed Mississippi as one of the top 10 states in the nation for small business survival. We've got more than 54,000 small businesses in this state – and I'm proud of the role they play in building Mississippi.

The chief economist for this group spoke about Mississippi, and I want you to listen carefully to what he had to say: “When it gets its policy mix right, a state is well-positioned to compete both nationally and globally, with policies geared to help economic growth accelerate, incomes increase, and job creation improve.”

That's what companies around the world are hearing about Mississippi. They're not listening

to those who try to say we're not a good place to do business.

And now, technology is playing an ever-increasing role in our work of building our state. Telecommunications, manufacturing and high-tech industries are becoming the norm, but the new role of technology in government – “e-government” – is changing the way people do business as well.

Individuals and companies are able to do more business on-line with the state, and that translates into faster service and less cost. You can buy a hunting and fishing license on-line from the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks.

Architects and landscape architects can apply for and renew their licenses on-line from the State Board of Architecture's website.

Visit the Department of Public Safety's website, and you can renew your driver's license without ever having to stand in line.

Citizens statewide can stay abreast of our efforts to ensure their safety and security by visiting the homeland security website, where the latest information and alert status is provided.

These sites are designed and put together by professionals who have forgotten more about the subject of information technology than I'll ever

know, and I appreciate the good work that they – and each one of you here – do every day to keep this state moving forward.

The hallmark of our vision for Mississippi is simple – we want to live up to our potential and promise.

Meeting that hallmark demands our very best. It calls us to examine our priorities and focus on the steps we must take in the months and years to come.

The work has already begun, but there's so much more to do – and it has to begin with the



financial support this state is willing to put behind its efforts.

As we begin the legislative budget process, I will continue to call for the adequate resources necessary to achieve success.

To accomplish this will demand tough decisions – and the first decision that must be made as the revenue estimate for Fiscal Year 2004 is debated. For two years running, I have called for an estimate that reflects the reality of our state and national economies – economies that have remained sluggish.

We cannot afford to base our budget on the simple hope that our economy will turn around.

We have to use realistic numbers, not the numbers we would all prefer.

If the creation of a state budget that supports all levels of education depended solely on what we wished would happen with the economy, we would have no problem.

But that's not the case. When we craft the budget, a budget that must – first and foremost – provide for the education of all our people, we must make tough decisions about where the funds for that budget will come from.

In my latest budget, I called for a 10 percent pay raise over five years for state employees. I stand by that call. We have to make an investment in

our people – in you – so that the dividends we reap in the future are that much larger. Simply put, I want us to pay you as the professionals you are.

The perception of Mississippi is changing. The old question of “Why Mississippi?” doesn’t get asked anymore. The question now is, “Why *not* Mississippi?”

And the answer is, because we can compete with anyone, anytime, anywhere.

We’re committed to building Mississippi and making sure it achieves its promise and potential. You deserve nothing less.

It was once said that “success seems to be largely a matter of hanging on after others have let go.”

I tell you this – we aren’t letting go. There are too many opportunities out there, and too many opportunities for us to create, to ever think about letting go.

Believing “I must do something” solves more problems than saying “something must be done.”

You won’t hear us say, “something must be done.” We live in America’s state of promise. It is a promise too long unkept. That has changed.

We can do this. It's happening right now. It's helping make a better, stronger, healthier Mississippi – and I'm thankful for it.

Thank you.