

*Remarks for the
Mississippi Department of Public Safety Memorial Ceremony
May 15, 2003*

■ Recognize Commissioner Huggins / Colonel
Claiborne / Frank Melton

Today is a day of remembrance, a day of reflection. It's a day where we join together as a state to give thanks for those who have made the ultimate sacrifice to ensure our safety and our security.

The role of the law enforcement professional has been in the spotlight – like never before – since September 11, 2001.

On that tragic and fateful day, we watched as law enforcement and emergency officers responded to terrorist attacks in New York and Washington with a sense of urgency, determination, and ultimately sacrifice.

That day reminded us more clearly than ever before of the importance of these men and women in our lives, and of the sacrifices they have made and continue to make on our behalf.

Today we remember and celebrate the dedication and the commitment of officers of the Mississippi Highway Patrol and the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics who have died in the line of duty.

24 officers of the Highway Patrol. 4 agents of the Bureau of Narcotics. A total of 28 lives lost in the line of duty, but how many lives did these officers save as a result of their work?

We'll never know the answer to that question, but we do know this – they served with distinction and they served with the knowledge that they were doing dangerous work.

We can never let it be forgotten just who they were working for – the innocent, law-abiding people of this state.

They took on the work of law enforcement because of a commitment to building good communities across Mississippi. The best memorial we can give to them is to ensure their work was not done in vain.

The responsibility doesn't just rest with those who continue to serve with the Patrol or the Bureau. It rests with each of us, with every public or private citizen, with every Mississippian who wants to raise a family, go to work, and live their life in security and peace.

How do we do that?

I believe we do it through education, we do it through the creation of quality jobs, we do it by providing health care to our children.

The investment we make in education helps strengthen the foundation for our future, and gives our children across the state a better opportunity to make the most of their promise and potential. When we invest 62 percent of our budget in education, when we provide an Internet-accessible computer in every classroom, when our teachers are paid a decent salary – then we are helping build productive and law-abiding citizens.

When we bring quality, high-paying jobs to the state, when we're able to recruit new business and keep the ones that are already here – then we are helping build productive and law-abiding citizens.

And when we combine good schools and good jobs, the result is good communities – productive, law-abiding communities.

That's good for all Mississippians.

The 28 law enforcement officers we remember today sacrificed their lives in an effort to build those communities. It's up to us to ensure those sacrifices were not made in vain.

To the officers and agents here today, I don't know if you know just how much you are appreciated. I appreciate you, and the people of Mississippi appreciate you. You are the ones on the dark streets, in the dangerous situations, risking your lives to protect ours.

You are the ones who keep us safe, you are the ones who help us build good communities, and we thank you. May God bless you and protect you.