

Mississippi Professional Educators Annual Convention
Saturday, March 17, 2001
7:30 a.m.
Hilton Hotel

(Message: Where education is heading in Mississippi)

Opening

- Good Morning
- (Story about traveling around the state on Thursday and Friday.)

Main Points

1. Budget
 - a. We must be responsible with your money.
 - b. You deserve and demand that of your state leaders.
 - c. Last year, the legislature
 - i. Overextended and
 - ii. Gambled with our budget
 - iii. I am not willing to do that this year.
 - d. In order to have an honest figure to work with, our budget must be:
 - i. Honest
 - ii. Straightforward
 - iii. Fiscally sound
 - e. We must correct the baseline figure for this year's budget

- i. Or we will start next year's budget \$85 million in the hole.
- f. This year, our state is growing at less than 1%
 - i. We cannot budget next year's growth based on 3.7%, like the legislature is proposing.
 - ii. The nation's economy is at a standstill.
 - iii. Our rate of growth, along with half the nation is sluggish.
 - iv. We cannot build our budget on hope
 - 1. We must be realistic.
- g. If we use these inflated figures to build our budget for the upcoming year, imagine the additional amount of money we will have to cut from our agencies, colleges and universities, and schools next year.
- h. We will be budgeting on quicksand.
 - i. The budget problem will escalate into a budget crisis!
 - j. We are urging the legislature to lower the estimated rate of growth from 3.7% to 1% now.
 - k. We should be honest with our people and make the adjustment that bases our rate of growth on a real number, if not:
 - i. It is misleading to our agencies
 - ii. It is misleading to our schools

- iii. It is misleading to our colleges and universities
- iv. It is misleading to our people.
- 1. We must restore credibility and common sense to Mississippi's budget.

2. Education

- a. If we budget responsibly, we are allowing the legislature to prioritize where we spend our money next year.
- b. My # 1 priority is education.
- c. It is vital that we make education our #1 priority when preparing the budget and spend accordingly.
- d. I want to be honest and upfront with next year's budget, so I do not have to make budget cuts next year.
- e. It is better to give agencies, schools, colleges and universities a realistic budget now
 - i. Rather than an inflated budget that will have to be cut next year.
- f. We have suggested using AMS funds to help bridge the gap in the shortfall for Fiscal Year 02 and help stabilize the budget
- g. We are open to other solutions, and we want to work with the legislature to find a solution that works.

- h. A strong education is vital to all future successes for the people of Mississippi.
- i. We have been silently investing in education for the past years
 - i. We are now beginning to reap the benefits.
- j. We cannot let a budget problem stand in our way of continued success.
- k. Our children and schools are benefiting because of the
 - i. Hard work and dedication of our teachers and educators.
- l. You have made a commitment to our children-to our future- to our educational system.
 - i. We must remain committed to you.
 - ii. It is my priority, and I will fight for education.

Closing

- Mississippi is headed forward.
- We are not going to turn back the clocks and disrupt our progress.
- We want more great opportunities for the people of Mississippi.
- We want our children to have the opportunity to live, work and raise their families here.

- Everyone plays a role in our success.
- Working together we can and will make it happen.
- The people of Mississippi deserve that commitment.
- The children of Mississippi deserve that commitment.
- Our future depends on everyone working as a team in Mississippi.
- Making plans now for an even better Mississippi will ensure that future generations continue to succeed in our state.