

Remarks for
Blues Commission
October 24, 2003

- Recognize:
- Moment of Silence for the Rev. Willie Lee Morganfield who died last Saturday-he was the cousin of Muddy Waters

- This has been an exciting year for the blues, in Mississippi and nationwide

- In August of 2002, our Congress officially proclaimed 2003 as “The Year of the Blues”

- Mississippi is the undisputed birthplace of the blues

- We've produced some of the world's finest blues musicians
 - W.C. Handy
 - Muddy Waters
 - Robert Johnson
 - Howlin' Wolf
 - John Lee Hooker
 - And, B. B. King- Who I named as blues ambassador for the State of MS in June of this year)

- They have all shaped and defined this authentic and truly American form of music

- From Greenville to Clarksdale, from Indianola to Tutwiler
 - We've shown the world our musical talent

- The blues has been performed, studied, and emulated around the world
 - But it all began here
 - Proud of Mississippi's blues heritage

- In February of this year I also proclaimed 2003 as "The Year of the Blues" and with the help of the MS Development Authority and its Tourism Division, we've been steadily promoting it here in Mississippi, in America, and around the world
 - There have been several blues festivals held statewide this year
 - Deep Delta Festival- in Rolling Fork
 - B.B. King Homecoming-in Indianola
 - Highway 61 Blues Festival-in Leland
 - Muddy River Music Fest-in Columbus

- Week-long celebration at the state's welcome centers with special media tour of cities in the MS delta that culminated at the Delta Heritage and Blues Festival in Greenville-the 2nd oldest blues festival in the U.S.

- MS Tourism Division also sponsored a Blues Festival Vacation Giveaway in conjunction with the week-long celebration in September

- Clint Eastwood, Martin Scorsese, and five other directors even filmed a seven-part series entitled "The Blues", that aired on PBS in September- in which they trace the origin of the blues from Africa to the Mississippi delta

- Mississippi- the birthplace of the blues and several nationally known artist has had a tremendous effect culturally, musically, and historically on the people of all ages and races

- In order to continue to promote, advance, and foster an appreciation of the blues in our state, nationally, and worldwide- the Mississippi Blues Commission has been established

- The board will consist of 15 members who will analyze the tourism potential of the blues in Mississippi, particularly in the delta and prepare a plan for marketing the blues to conferences, music performances, filmmakers and others

- Willie Dixon said, “The blues are the true facts of life expressed in words and song, inspiration, feeling, and understanding.”

- It is up to us to keep this art form alive and educate our citizens about the impact blues has had on people from all walks of life