

**MISSISSIPPI MINUTE    11/18/02    (to be recorded after Gallo Show)**

For nearly two years now, we have been faced with a national recession. This recession has affected the budgets of every state, not to mention every household.

In Mississippi, we've weathered this recession better than many of our neighbors. We've kept critical state services operating for our people, in spite of the fact that our budget, and the budgeting process, are far from perfect.

With that in mind, we have to make difficult decisions and set priorities. Education has always been my main priority for Mississippi, and my budget recommendation for the 2004 fiscal year backs it up.

We started this budget process focusing on education, and ended it with a budget that puts "Schools First," with 62 percent of the budget going towards education.

We've made great progress in education. It's time to step up our commitment and continuing making a difference for the future of this state and for the future of our children.

There are challenges ahead of us in the coming year, but that's nothing new. What is new is the manner in which I am proposing to take on those challenges and turn them into opportunities for our people.

I'm Ronnie Musgrove, and this has been the Mississippi Minute. Thanks for listening.