

*Remarks for the
Closing of the Mississippi Women's Conference
March 17, 2003*

Good afternoon; it's good to be back with you. I hope your day proved to be as much as you anticipated – and I hope you're ready to leave here with a sharpened vision of what both you and Mississippi can be.

When I spoke this morning, I closed by saying that I would speak to our investment in education and what it means for business – a relationship I know you all appreciate and understand, but one that comes more into focus with the facts.

I'm proud – and we should all be proud – of what this state has done during a national recession that has every state hurting. We've funded education at more than 60 percent of our general fund. And why? Because good schools build good jobs, which build good communities. Our investment in education doesn't just benefit our children; it benefits all Mississippians.

I'll let the facts speak for themselves. Since January 2000, we have over 2,100 new and expanded facilities; more than 50,000 new jobs; and we've seen a total business investment of more than \$14 billion in our state.

That's good news, and it's happened because of a lot of hard work. But, it's also happened because companies look at Mississippi, and they see that we are committed to education from pre-K through adult training. They see that we are dedicated to lifting the tide for all Mississippians.

I hope you leave here today sharing that dedication with me, a dedication to using your talents and skills to take our whole state to the next level.

There's a difference to be made, and I look forward to working with you in making it happen. Thank you.