

*Remarks for the
9/11 Tribute – Mississippi World Trade Center
September 11, 2002*

(recognize Liles Williams, Barbara Travis, Orley Hood, Dean Robinson)

In May of this year, I stood in this room to celebrate the official opening of Mississippi's World Trade Center. The work done here echoes around the world, with its message of what Mississippi has to offer through its people, its resources, and its commitment to growth.

On this September 11 – one year removed from the terrorist attacks in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania – we are here to reinforce the work done here. Those behind the attacks of 9/11 brought down the buildings of the World Trade Center – but they didn't bring down their real target – the idea behind World Trade Center.

The World Trade Center is much more than bricks, mortar and steel. The World Trade Center is built of ideas, of promise, and of hope.

When I stood here before, I shared the words written by Guy Tozzoli (Tah-zoh-lee), president of the World Trade Centers Association.

He wrote, “We are not so adolescent that we think world trade will rid the world of evil. It will not by itself stop wars. But, if the world is ever to achieve understanding among peoples, if war is to be relegated to history books, novels and movies, it will not be done without trade. That, we are sure of.”

Our nation is now at war. We are not alone in our fight – there are other countries that share in our commitment to the principles of freedom and trade on which we stand. And, we will not – we cannot – lose this war.

Thousands died in the attacks of 9/11. I believe they did not die in vain. The work done here, the work done in New York and World Trade Center offices around the world, will help make sure of that.

The attacks on our country changed our perception of the world around us. We see things less in black and white – and more in red, white and blue. Our perceptions of the world around us have changed – and priorities have been re-assessed.

But despite these changes, we are marching on with a renewed determination to the principles on which our nation was founded – principles focused on freedom. They are the principles that have stood as a model for other countries to follow, and we will not allow those principles to be compromised.

We believe in a freedom that allows us to express our thoughts and views without fear of retribution. We believe in a country where we can worship with the knowledge that, when we pray, we can do so with a sense of peace and comfort.

It is good for us to reflect on the days and events of this past year, but it is also important to look forward to the dreams and challenges of the year to come.

Mississippi is, in so many ways, “America’s state of promise.” We are blessed with good people, good resources and good hearts. The combination of these three blessings gives us the tools to create our own opportunities.

That’s the challenge we face today.

We have shown ourselves to be up to this challenge. We have continued to recruit new business and retain existing businesses during difficult times. The work we do when times are tough helps determine the prosperity we enjoy during the good times.

We have the tools to get this work done. We have the people and the talent and the resources to get this work done. We have the memories and legacies left behind by thousands of innocent people on which we can build our collective future.

It's been said that "history balances the frustration of 'how far we have to go' with the satisfaction of 'how far we have come.'" We have indeed come a long way and accomplished great things in the past year. Let's not let frustration hold us back from the work to come.

We will continue to move forward in our effort to build Mississippi, and to build America.

That's the work of the World Trade Center – in Mississippi, in New York, and around the world.

We can look with pride at the work being done here. It's work that is helping a nation heal its wounds and look to the future.

Ben Franklin once asked, “the noblest question in the world is, ‘what good may I do in it?’” We know the good we can do here – good that will strengthen the foundation for generations of Mississippians and Americans to come.

The World Trade Center isn't just a building.
It's an idea, and it's a good one.

May God bless our state and our nation.