

Mississippi Day In New York's Central Park
Saturday, June 9, 2001
1:30 p.m.

Talking Points

Mississippi is on location in New York City's Central Park! We are excited to have the opportunity to be with you this year for the 22nd Annual Mississippi Picnic in New York. It is good to see friends and to have many new people joining us this year.

We have been here a few days meeting with writers of the New York Times, Business Week, Forbes and others along with leaders in the business community letting them know that whether they are looking for a great place to expand or locate a business, a place to retire, a site location to film a movie or an exciting place for entertainment, Mississippi is the right location.

What a difference a year makes. In the past year we've focused our efforts on making great things happen in Mississippi. We developed partnerships that have given us the advantage – specifically, the Advantage Mississippi Initiative.

Through it, we landed one of the top economic development projects in the country. The Nissan plant currently under construction means an investment of \$930 million into our economy and 4,000 jobs for the people of Mississippi.

Along with the Nissan plant, we have suppliers from around the country looking to locate in Mississippi. This means more jobs and more investment in our state.

We've done a lot in the past year, and we're not slowing down.

We're working to expand opportunities for our people. The best way we can do that is through education. Education is the number one priority of our administration, and it must be the priority of entire state.

We are in the process of raising teacher pay in Mississippi to the Southeastern average. It is vital that we have professionals in the classroom educating our students. The only way to do that is to pay our teachers a competitive salary so they can do their jobs well. I am committed to education – committed to our teachers - committed to our students.

We are right on track to make Mississippi the first state in the nation to place an Internet-accessible computer in every public school classroom by the end of 2002. We have created the largest public/private partnership to fund this effort and with the help of friends like Bob Pittman with AOL, Fred Smith of Federal Express and many foundations including the Maddox Foundation. We are more than half-way to meeting our goal, and we are gaining momentum.

I am excited about what's happening in Mississippi. I feel good about the direction we're taking, and so should you. We knew there were going to be challenges, and we've met those challenges head-on.

We've been proactive and we're seeing the results. I am proud of what we've done, and what we will do together. Even if you don't live in Mississippi now, I hope that you will take an active role in your home state, or for many of you, your adopted home state. Together we can shine the world's spotlight on Mississippi – America's State of Promise.