

*Remarks for the
New York Consultants Luncheon
June 6, 2002*

(open with story of traveling to DC; lawyer on plane who didn't believe you were governor)

Whether it's one lawyer on a plane or one thousand people who read an article in The New York Times about what we're doing here, people are learning that Mississippi is changing.

They're learning that we're doing business in a different way.

They're learning that we're being recognized for our forward-thinking approaches to education.

We're doing great work for the state of Mississippi. Great things are happening in our state. We're capturing the attention of the world outside our borders because of the work we're doing.

We're on the cutting edge in education. We now have over 1,100 teachers in Mississippi with this National Board certification – the sixth highest number in the nation. Let me repeat that – the sixth highest in the nation. Not 50th, not 40th, not 10th – sixth highest.

Mississippi was the first state in the nation to offer more pay to teachers with national board certification.

We are also on track to be the first state in the nation to place an internet-accessible computer in every public school classroom, a goal we'll meet by the end of next year.

We've put together a unique partnership between the public and private sectors, a partnership that has raised money and solicited used computers for the classrooms.

We are going to ensure that our children are ready to compete in the economy of the 21st century, an economy that will be global, borderless and wireless.

Now, combine this with our commitment to pay teachers like the professionals they are. In July, we made this commitment law and the rest of the nation stood up and took notice.

The day after the special session on teacher pay, the New York Times ran an editorial piece commenting that “Mississippi had been able to put together the kind of package that continued to elude New York.”

High praise for our work, and I'm proud our commitment to our teachers has received such widespread notice. I want the world to know that we're serious about education in Mississippi, we're serious about building a better world for our people, and we're serious about shaping a brighter future for our children.

And on that foundation, we're going to build an economy like our state has never seen. Two years ago, we landed the top economic development project in the nation, and we did it like no one else.

It's a process that normally takes 18 months.
From our first contact with Nissan to the day we
announced – *5 months*.

We did it because we were ambitious, we
wanted the project more than anyone else, and
we had the Advantage Mississippi Initiative –
the most aggressive economic development
package in the nation.

It's been said that “business is a combination of
war and sport.” The investment, the
commitment and the experience we bring to
doing business in Mississippi determine whether
we win or lose.

Mentioned as one of the top ten economic development projects in the nation, the Nissan project alone is creating 4,000 direct new jobs and investing nearly \$1 billion in our state. The spin-off Tier 1 suppliers, like M-Tek, Unipres, and Calsonic Kansei, represent another billion dollars and more than 20,000 new jobs.

The work on the Nissan facility in Canton is ahead of schedule, under budget, and being built by a Mississippi contractor. I'm *proud of that* because it shows better than *any* spreadsheet what we're doing in Mississippi.

Our work to bring in more large projects hasn't slowed. The recent Hyundai project was a tremendous opportunity for the state, and in the end we got closer to it than 46 other states. The very fact that Mississippi was one of the four finalists for Hyundai's first North American plant speaks volumes about what we're doing here.

There are other successful stories to share – not as large as Nissan, perhaps, but equally important to the man or woman who gets a job or keeps a job because we were able to recruit or retain a business.

There's Alcoa in DeSoto County. The company had made the decision to close their facility there, but we were able to work with them to not only keep it open but double the size of the facility and the workforce.

When Whirlpool was looking to consolidate some of their operations, they didn't close their facility in Oxford. Instead, they closed plants in Canada and increased the number of jobs at their Mississippi plant.

These are companies that want to do business in Mississippi, and we're *more than happy* to help them.

A few weeks ago, I returned home from a business development mission to Japan. During our time there, we met with representatives from Nissan and some of the Tier 1 suppliers now setting up shop in Mississippi.

We met with members of different trade organizations, local businessmen and the foreign press. Everyone we met with had a positive viewpoint of Mississippi.

We talked about the Advantage Mississippi Initiative. We talked about the quality of our workforce and the availability of skilled workers. We talked about what we're doing in education to strengthen our economic growth even further.

These are the issues they wanted to hear about in Japan.

Mississippi is a *good* place to do business. The national recession has presented challenges, but we have worked hard to overcome them.

We are committed to creating quality, high-paying jobs for the people of this state. We are committed to recruiting and retaining strong businesses for this state.

We have the workforce. The recent Pathfinder study found that a new employer in the central area of the state would be able to hire from a pool of more than 68,000 *underemployed* workers.

This doesn't take into account the people who are currently unemployed and would jump at the chance for a good job.

Let's look at some more things happening in Mississippi. In the past two years, we've created more than 21,000 new jobs and more than \$6 billion has been invested in our state and our people.

During a national recession, we've been able to do some great things, and we've been able to do them because we are committed to building this state.

First and foremost, we cannot back off on our investments and efforts to grow Mississippi. During the 2002 legislative session, the Mississippi Development Authority was facing cuts of up to 28 percent, but we fought for the MDA, and in the end, we reached common ground on the funding commitment for economic development.

If we don't invest in the primary economic development agency in the state now, we shouldn't expect to see strong results later. It's that simple.

There have also been stories in the paper recently that show Mississippi is working, and working hard.

For the first time, *Site Selection* magazine ranked Mississippi this year in its top ten places to do business in the country.

We led the nation in existing home sales during the first quarter of 2002, with more than 60,000 homes sold. The nearly 30 percent increase is attributed to the number of people coming to new jobs in Mississippi, the number of people who are able to afford new homes, and lower interest rates.

We led the nation in exports during the first half of 2001, with our exports up 30 percent. This increase is due to more than the usual agricultural products Mississippi is known for.

We're building and shipping offshore oil rigs, machinery, paper, plastics and furniture. Our exports totaled more than \$3.5 billion, and over 60,000 jobs in the state are related to exports.

The Magnolia State is competing well in the global marketplace, and we're ready to take our game to the next level.

At the beginning of May, we formally opened the Mississippi World Trade Center – one of the objectives of the Advantage Mississippi Initiative.

With the opening of the center, opportunities for economic expansion for our state will be increased. Our World Trade Center will bring global attention to our state and offer further evidence that Mississippi can compete with anyone, anytime, anywhere.

We *want* business in Mississippi, and we're *bringing* business to Mississippi. Regardless of the inappropriate and irresponsible action taken by the U.S. Chamber, we're moving on with our work.

What they did with their call for a boycott and purchases of full page ads was no more than political blackmail. I want to ask, how many of you have ever supported a boycott? You know no one ever wins in a boycott.

We will continue to work for the jobs and the business. The people of Mississippi deserve no less, and because of this work they will have a roof over their head, food on their table and clothes on their back. They will have the sense of security and sense of confidence that comes with a good job.

The bottom line is this – now is not the time to back off our investments and efforts to bring jobs to Mississippi.

Our potential stretches to every corner of Mississippi – from the Gulf Coast to Tishomingo County – and it stretches to every Mississippian. It cannot and will not be wasted.

Mississippi is open for business – and I look forward to having you come see us. Thank you for the opportunity to be with you today.

