

*Remarks for
Oktibbeha / Tunica County School Districts
March 27, 2002*

This is a great day for the students, the teachers and the schools of this district. You have demonstrated your commitment to making a difference – and the commitment has paid off.

Earlier today, I spoke at a conference on volunteerism. The theme of the conference was “Investing in Mississippi’s Future: Together We Can Do It!”

That same theme is being reflected here.

Five years ago, this district was faced with a daunting challenge – one that demanded cooperation, dedication and a shared vision for the role of education in Mississippi.

Think about the key words of that theme – *invest, future, together.*

We must invest in our state and our people to make the most of our potential. During a national recession, we've created more than 21,000 new jobs and attracted over \$6 billion in new investments to the state.

We made it in the top ten of *Site Selection* magazine's "Governor's Cup" awards – a testament to the work we're doing to build Mississippi.

I stress this again – we're doing this in the midst of a national recession, and we're doing it because we're investing.

Now, we have to keep those investments strong. This is not the time to cut our funding for programs like the Mississippi Development Authority or workforce training for our people.

More than ever, we should be putting money into areas where we know we can get a strong return. Let's invest in our people today to build a better tomorrow.

The work we're doing now – *together* – is so important to the work we'll be doing in the years to come.

Our investments in economic development and in education will be the bedrock of our success in the future, and our commitment to the strength of that bedrock has been affirmed today.

I'm proud of the work you've done here.

I'm excited about the work we're going to do together to make education in Mississippi the very best it can be. We owe our children and our future nothing less.

It is my pleasure to sign this proclamation dissolving the state of emergency and reinstating the accreditation of this school district.