

*Remarks for the  
Profiles in Leadership Awards Dinner  
October 16, 2001*

Thank you, Scott. It is indeed a pleasure to be here with you this evening, to once again honor individuals from the Mississippi Delta who have distinguished themselves through their contributions to the people and the growth of the Delta.

Tonight's dinner is about "profiles in leadership." I've heard it said that leaders are "visionaries with a poorly developed sense of fear and no concept of the odds against them."

By that definition, those we profile tonight are truly extraordinary individuals.

The three men we honor this evening – Richard Flowers, Jimmie Dick Carter and Edward Kossman – have left their own individual marks on the growth and success of the Delta region.

It is important for us to try and share those qualities of leadership – the poorly developed sense of fear, no concept of the odds against us.

It's how great things happen.

Let's look at the great things about this region called the Delta. It is a tremendously rich area – rich in its land, its culture, its history, its people. It is a great resource for our state – and I want to see this resource used wisely and used well.

How can we best use the promise that is the Mississippi Delta region? First, let's look at what has already been done.

The soil of the Delta is legendary, and our nation has benefited from the hard work of those who use the land to provide. Cotton, rice, soybeans, now catfish – the Delta is alive with the work of providing for a country.

The heart of the Delta is known worldwide, from its music to its literature. From Robert Johnson at the crossroads to Walker Percy, the Delta has influenced the world with its unique culture and talent.

The industry of the Delta has grown through the development of businesses like Viking.

Businesses around the country and the world, especially with the location of Nissan in Mississippi, are taking a long look at the great potential of this area.

And, we're investing in the infrastructure of the Delta to help ensure a strong foundation for further growth.

Since the beginning of this year alone, we have invested more than \$2.6 million in public facilities, economic development and recreation improvements in towns across the Delta. Over \$1.5 million has been awarded in Bolivar County alone for intervention programs for children, to help people move from welfare to work, and to improve public facilities.

What about the promise of the Delta in the future?

We've made great strides in educating our children. We've made a commitment to paying our teachers like the professionals they are, a commitment that will raise our state from 49<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> in the nation over the next few years in terms of average teacher salary.

I'm proud that Mississippi is being seen as a leader in education by other states. In fact, the day after the July special session, The New York Times published an editorial praising the work we had done together.

Mississippi, according to The Times, had – with its scarce resources and small economy – put together the type of package that continues to elude New York.

I don't know about you, but I think it's about time Mississippi set the standard in educational progress in our country. And, we're doing it in other areas of education as well.



Through a unique partnership between the state and private industry, we are working toward our goal of placing an internet-accessible computer in every public school classroom in the state. By the end of next year, Mississippi will be the first state in the nation to reach this milestone.

The “Computers in the Classroom” initiative, working with the new commitment to teachers, will prepare the children of this great region and the entire state for the marketplace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – a marketplace that will be borderless, wireless and global.

That is how we're meeting the promise of the Delta.

We are looking at new ways to address the health care issues affecting so many Mississippians, and especially those in the more rural areas. For too long, we have led the country in those areas where we want to be in last place – first in diabetes, first in heart disease, first in population underserved by primary care physicians.

Now, we have an opportunity to change those rankings; we don't have to continue leading in the "worst firsts."

Here's how we do it: we use a portion of the historic tobacco settlement to make a dramatic difference in the lives of the people of this state. We can remove the obstacles that have held us back, and commit ourselves to a better future.

Let's take a portion of those dollars and use them for what they were earmarked for – the health care needs of the people of Mississippi.

Let's use those dollars to maximize available federal matching funds. In other words, give us a quarter and we'll turn it into a dollar.

Let's then use those dollars for things like expanding screenings for cancer and heart disease; putting more nurses in schools to help our children; and easing the health insurance burden on state and school employees by eliminating deductibles for doctor visits and reducing dependent costs.

You've heard the phrase, "pay me now or pay me later." That's what we're talking about here. We can spend money on the front end on preventive measures, or we can spend more money later on dealing with the effects of untreated illnesses.

We can make a tremendous difference for the people of the Delta and the entire state. We can do it. With the help of leaders like Chairman Charlie Capps, a past honoree at this event, we can realize just how far we can go and how dramatic a change is possible for this great area.

Profiles in Leadership. We see it in so many places, at so many levels. We saw the leadership of Roosevelt and Churchill during World War II. We're seeing the leadership of President Bush and the strength of a bipartisan effort against terrorism right now.

We see leadership at the front of a classroom. We see it in a parent setting an example for a child. We see it in a businessman going the extra mile for his employees and community.

We see leadership in this room tonight, and particularly in the three men we are here to honor.

I am proud of their commitment to the people and the principles they serve. These men – Richard Flowers, Jimmie Dick Carter, Edward Kossman – they are part of the fabric of the Delta, a strong fabric woven with threads of history, literature, music and agriculture.

The Mississippi Delta region is better  
because of them. Thank you.