

*Remarks for the  
Drug-Free / Red Ribbon Week  
October 22, 2002*

Good morning! It is great to be here, and great to have a chance to be around young people like you, the future of Mississippi. Michael, thank you for that introduction – you did a great job.

(you may want to talk about your childhood, graduating from high school and then college)

This morning, I am looking at one of the great strengths of our country. Each of you here today, as young Mississippians and young Americans, have something tremendous to offer.

It is important for you to have every opportunity to share your gifts. That is why I place so much emphasis on education here in Mississippi, because for you to make the most of your potential, you must have a strong foundation on which to build.

I want to make sure your foundations are strong.

I want you to have the very best teachers possible standing at the front of your classrooms; that's why we are going to start paying your teachers like the professionals they are.

I want you to be able to compete in the borderless, wireless and global economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century; that's why we're working to put internet-accessible computers in every public school classroom in the state by the end of 2002.

I know each of you here today has a dream. When I was eight years old, I dreamed of being a lawyer – and I worked hard for that dream.

As I said, I was the first person in my family to go to college. On my first day of law school, I went to class thirty minutes early because I didn't want to miss anything.

When I got to that class, there were two other students in the room. As we talked and got to know each other, I realized that if they could be lawyers, then I could be a great lawyer.

One of the students in the room that day didn't last too long as a lawyer, choosing instead to become a writer. I'm sure you've heard of John Grisham?

Whatever it is you want to do, wherever it is you want to go – work hard for that goal and know there are others who want to see you succeed.

Each of you has the promise and the potential to do great things with your lives. I want you to make the most of that promise and potential – and the best way to do that is by remaining drug-free.

There are many temptations that you'll face in life – temptations that may look good at the time but can only cause destruction and despair. I know that each of you has the strength and the desire to succeed – and I know that each of you will.

This week, you'll be hearing a lot about substance abuse. I want you to listen carefully; this information is being shared with you because there are a lot of people who want to see you do well – your families, your teachers, your friends.

Ayn (*rhymes with “mine”*) Rand, a famous author in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, wrote in her novel *The Fountainhead*: “The question isn't who's going to let me; it's who's going to stop me.”

Don't let anyone stop you from going after your dreams, and know that we're here to help you reach as high as you can.

Usually it's only in science fiction or fortune tellers that we think about seeing the future. I know I don't have a crystal ball, but I can see the future for Mississippi – it's right here in front of me today.

From what I see, the future is strong. I'm proud of you and what you will do, and I'm excited for our state and our country.

God bless you all as you go for the stars.