

- Thank Ms. Susan Womack (Executive Director Parents for Public Schools)

- Recognize:
 - Dr. Henry Johnson and his staff who have helped with the conference
 - Mrs. Margaret Cooper (State Director of Crime Stoppers Program)
 - Mr. Rick Tillotson (President of MS Parent Teacher Association)
 - Ms. Edna Drake (Assistant Chief of Police JPD)
 - Mr. Frank Melton
 - Mr. Chris Epps
 - All parents, teachers and former superintendents

- pleasure to be here / celebrate the Fifth Annual “Safe Schools: A Parent’s Perspective” Conference

- here because we have the same vision and the same goals when it comes to keeping our most precious resources safe

- We all share in this monumental task and are ultimately responsible to every parent and every child in this state to make sure our schools are safe and that they foster a nurturing learning environment

- Earlier this week-
 - MS Dept. of Education
 - MS Bureau of Narcotics
 - MS Association of School Resource Officers
 - MS Crime Stoppers
 - Dept. of Public Safety's Division of Public Safety Planning entered into an agreement to promote and maintain safe schools and safe communities
 - agencies / use existing resources / share information and training / collaborate to protect our children

- Another way we are keeping our schools safe is through a partnership between Ms Dept. of Public Safety, Crime Stoppers Advisor Council, and MDE
 - Three years ago these entities established the “Connections” Hotline
 - It is a toll free number answered 24 hours a day
 - The purpose of the hotline is to furnish parents, students, staff, teachers, and administrators with a place they can report issues, situations, information regarding school safety anonymously
 - The hotline has received more than 1,000 calls that have resulted in the recovery of 14 handguns and five felony arrest

- We are diligently working and will continue to work to keep our schools and our children safe

- In Mississippi we have our priorities straight
 - Education- school safety, investment, and accountability

- Improving quality of life for all of our 2.8 million citizens
- As Governor these are the priorities I have focused on
- The theme for this conference “Investment In Our Future”
 - Is profound
 - It is a topic I hold dear to me and something I’m willing to go to bat for
 - The youth of Mississippi are 1/3 of population and yet, all of our future
- If you think about it in those terms/ our children are under a considerable amount of pressure and have great expectations to live up too
- I know it gets hard sometimes for them and they may even want to give up
 - encourage them to persevere, motivate them to learn, and to inspire them so they will not think quitting is an option

- We have to leave the doors of communication open so that nothing—whether its drugs, questionable behavior, or fear stops **OUR CHILDREN & OUR FUTURE** from reaching their goals and their full potential

- My parents always taught us the importance of having a good education
 - It can take you anywhere/ it can open any door
 - With a good education there is no limits to what **OUR CHILDREN** can accomplish

- I'm a living testament to that
 - I'm from a town many of you probably have never heard of (**TELL YOUR STORY**)
 - Yet, I became a senator, Lt. Governor and now Governor

- Franklin D. Roosevelt said, “The school is the last expenditure upon which America should be willing to compromise.”

- Some other states are willing to compromise- but Mississippi isn’t one of them

- By working together, we have accomplished a lot, but it hasn’t been easy:
 - Every state impacted by national recession
 - More than \$7 trillion lost in stock market
 - June 2003 report from Bureau of Labor Statistics: 9.4 million Americans out of work –NAFTA 41,000 to Mexico
 - Alabama, Texas and Florida are raising taxes and Arkansas is cutting services. Mississippi has refused to follow

- Image of MS in 2003 far different than the image most know

- Moving faster than anyone else into the 21st century
 - Competing and leading in the global marketplace
 - Setting new standards for education and economic development
- Mississippi is a recognized leader in education
- Teacher pay / 49th to 19th when fully implemented
 - Computers in the Classroom
 - Accountability
 - Princeton Review: 12th best testing system in nation
 - Leading other states in preparedness for “No Child Left Behind”
 - Our test scores are improving
 - Last month we announced our State Accountability system, more than 80% of Mississippi public schools have achieved a rating of Level 3/Successful or higher.
 - Under the federal NCLB accountability system, 50% of MS

schools met the Adequate Yearly Progress requirements for reading/language arts and math.

- NCLB score: Alabama – 33%, Delaware – 43%, Tennessee – 53%, and Florida 13%
- 6th in the nation in National Board Certified Teachers
- Historic action of funding education first

■ **GOOD SCHOOLS = GOOD JOBS**

- We all recognize that public schools are the cornerstones of our communities and the key to a successful economy
- We are giving our children more opportunity than they've ever had before
- Mississippi has experienced significant growth over the past three years

- We are aggressive about creating good paying, quality jobs for all Mississippians
 - Over 2,200 new and expanded facilities
 - More than 56,000 new jobs
 - Total investment in Mississippi nearly \$15 billion

- The best thing for a child to see everyday on their way to school is their parents on the way to a good job

- The image of the Mississippi of 2003 is unlike anything anyone could have imagined
 - It's an image of people working in highly-skilled, well-paying jobs
 - It's an image of children in classrooms equipped with the technology to bring the world to their desk
 - It's an image of global companies looking for a place to do business in the state

- It's an image everyone here today is helping to build

■ Thank you for inviting me and I hope your conference is a success