

*Remarks for the
“Click It or Ticket” Press Conference
July 31, 2001*

Thank you, Commissioner Huggins. Today we're here to talk about how one simple act can make a tremendous difference in the lives of millions of Mississippians every day.

What is that one simple act? Buckling a seatbelt.

Through a grant from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to the Mississippi Department of Public Safety Planning, we have been participating in the “Click It or Ticket” campaign.

This campaign focused on the importance of seatbelt usage, and was targeted at one of the busiest travel weekends around the country – Memorial Day.

Due to the hard work of the Department of Public Safety, the Mississippi Highway Patrol and other law enforcement agencies, seatbelt usage increased 26.5 percent.

More importantly, there were no fatalities on Mississippi Highway Patrol roads during the Memorial Day weekend.

These 68 people you see sitting off to the side here represent the number of lives that will be saved this year if we continue to buckle up.

And, I can tell you from first hand experience, buckling up does make a difference. It can save a life.

Look for a moment at the statistics on seatbelt usage. 82 percent of those killed in Mississippi last year between the ages of 16 and 34 were not wearing seatbelts.

Last year, 116 young people, 17 years of age and younger, died in traffic accidents. 59 percent of them were not wearing seatbelts.

I've talked a lot lately about the promise and potential for Mississippi. We cannot put that promise, that potential, found in our young people at risk because we didn't teach them about buckling a seatbelt.

It is not a matter of being told what to do. It's simply a matter of doing what should be done to protect lives – and protect our future.

I'm proud of the work that has been done by Commissioner Huggins, Colonel Claiborne, and the men and women of our state's public safety and law enforcement agencies.

Now, I urge all Mississippians to help make their job a little easier. Take a few seconds to buckle up. It makes a difference.

Thank you.