

*Remarks for the
Special Session Press Conference
July 6, 2001*

Since I took office, teacher pay has been a top priority for my administration. I have talked about raising our teacher pay to the southeastern average, and bringing our average salary up from 49th to 19th in the nation.

Last year, the Legislature passed a teacher pay raise bill. But included in that bill was a provision that said if the economy grew by less than five percent, the raises would not be provided.

On the day I signed that bill, I said that I would work to remove that five percent provision from the legislation. Since then, I have continued to carry that message around Mississippi.

Today, Lt. Governor Tuck and Speaker Ford announced their support for the removal of that provision.

I am pleased the legislative leadership has chosen to call for this action, and I thank the members of the Legislature for their support of this effort over the past months.

Education is a priority in my administration. Our children and our teachers deserve our strongest efforts.

That is why today I am calling a special session to deal with the removal of the five percent provision. I am calling the session for Wednesday, July 18, at 10am.

There is no greater investment we can make than in education. Our commitment to the future of Mississippi begins with our commitment to the children of Mississippi.

The time for action is now. Let's do what is right for the future, and for our children.