

*Special Session on Teacher Pay
July 23, 2001*

I am proud of Mississippi today.

We've just made history. By making good on our promise to our teachers, we have helped to shape the future for this state.

For years, education has been at the forefront of issues in Mississippi. Because of the action taken here today, we will raise teacher pay to the southeastern average and move Mississippi from 49th to 19th in the teacher pay ranks.

The removal of the five percent provision sends a message from Mississippi today, one that says we want to build a future on the promise and potential of our people – and we are doing that by paying our teachers like the professionals they are.

And by making sure we have our best and brightest at the front of the classrooms, our children will know that we value them and the contributions they will make in the years to come.

I am proud of the work that has been done here today. I am proud of the teachers for their dedication to the children of Mississippi. I am proud of the legislators for their commitment to our teachers.

I am proud of Mississippi today.