

*Remarks for the
Mississippi Association of Supervisors Convention
June 20, 2002*

Thank you, Summer. (recognize any dignitaries)

(DC plane story)

It doesn't always matter, though, what we do for a living. It's what we do for each other that makes a difference. It's what we do for our children, for our senior citizens, for those who can't do for themselves, that makes a difference.

How we do that work depends on the strength of the relationships between all levels of government, and I'm pleased with the strength of our relationship. I have always worked to be accessible and cooperative to you, and our partnerships have paid off.

I was proud to work with you particularly in the naming of a new state aid engineer. Floyd Kirk was the top choice for all of us, and I regret his having to leave the position for health reasons.

However, in replacing him, I relied heavily on your input and advice – and I appreciate the role you play in building Mississippi.

In my State of the State address last January, I laid out four priorities for our state – jobs, education, health care and public safety. All very different priorities, but all dependent on each other for our ultimate success.

I want to touch on two of those priorities today.

Since the attacks of September 11, we've had to deal with new and daunting challenges. I spoke a few weeks ago to the Sheriff's Association. I know you work closely with them and, like me, appreciate more than ever the difficult jobs they do each day.

There are public safety challenges we share with them – among them the challenge of making the best use of our resources to protect our citizens.

The rapid growth of private prisons and the funding that has been appropriated to maintain them is just such a challenge.

Since the construction of the private prisons began, we have struggled with maintaining a balance between them and our state-run operations.

I do not believe we should be funding operations that duplicate those already managed by our Department of Corrections – that’s why I have vetoed funding for the prisons for the past two years.

The other priority I want to visit today has been highly visible in the news lately.

There’s been a great deal of media coverage in the past week about the expansion of the Nissan project and tomorrow’s special session.

I'm proud of what we've been able to do with this project and the hundreds of other expansions in Mississippi, especially in the midst of a national recession.

There's an old saying that "many an opportunity is lost because of time spent looking for four-leaf clovers."

Not here. We're always looking for opportunities and, in the times when we don't see them, we're creating them. That's how we're moving Mississippi ahead.

The news for the past week has focused on the expansion of the Nissan facility, and the fact that Nissan wants to expand in Mississippi before their original facility is even finished speaks volumes about what we're doing here.

Perhaps it's because the project is ahead of schedule and under budget. Perhaps it's because we've demonstrate our ability to compete at the highest levels.

The expansion also sends a strong message about the business climate in our state.

For all the publicity surrounding the Nissan project, however, the expansion of jobs around the state has been occurring on a regular basis. We've been creating jobs in the midst of a national recession, something that we can look to with pride.

We may not be able to control what's happening on Wall Street, but we can work as hard as possible to affect what happens on Main Street. The work we do with a small business is just as important as the work we do with a company like Nissan.

There is an on-going effort to sell Mississippi to new businesses, and I want to thank you for the role you play in that process. At every level across the state, the recruitment process never stops, and it is important for us to be ready to go anywhere in the world to promote the state. It is in growing our existing businesses, however, that we will always experience our greatest success, and the numbers in this category speak for themselves.

Over the course of the past two years, over 21,000 new jobs have been created in the state. Of those jobs, more than 17,000 came from the expansion of existing businesses.

Looking back to January 2002, here's a snapshot of what's been done: Northrop Grumman Ship Systems in Harrison County added 520 new jobs. Lane Home Furnishings in Lee County added 400 new jobs.

The Alcoa plant in DeSoto County was targeted for closure, but we worked with the company and convinced them to stay. The end result was an expansion of their facility through a \$17 million capital investment and 200 additional jobs.

When Whirlpool was looking to consolidate its operations, it decided to close facilities in Canada and other areas and expand its operation in Oxford. The \$10 million capital investment there led to 150 new jobs.

The list goes on, but for the first two months of this year alone, 60 companies expanded their facilities. These expansions represented a total capital investment of more than \$286 million and 1,204 jobs.

Again, this is strong evidence about the business climate in Mississippi.

The work of growing Mississippi doesn't stop, even during a national recession. When times are tough, that's when we have our chance to show what we can do.

We're not spending our time looking for four-leaf clovers; we'll leave that to somebody else. There are too many opportunities for us to create on our own.

I appreciate the work you do each day to create those opportunities in your counties, and I look forward to working with you to keep building Mississippi. Thank you.

