

Teacher Pay Raise
Press Conference
Thursday, May 10, 2001

- Raising teacher pay to the southeastern average is the most critical issue facing the people of Mississippi.
- That is a statement you heard me say time, and time, and time again when I was campaigning for Governor.
- It became a driving force for my first legislative session of Governor
- On May 1, 2000 I signed the teacher pay raise bill into law.
- I did so with one reservation.
- The members of the legislature made the decision to attach a 5% revenue growth rate requirement on the teacher pay raise salaries.
- I didn't agree with that requirement then – and I don't agree with that requirement now.
- I spent a majority of this past legislative session talking with members of the legislature – telling them the 5% must be removed.
- The 5% requirement is an excuse.
- Our teachers know it is an excuse.
- If we say that education is a priority in Mississippi, then let's put our money where our mouth is.
- The legislature has said it is their job to appropriate the money for the state.
- I agree.
- It is their responsibility to spend our people's money.
- But they don't want to spend our money on education.
- They don't want to spend our money on good, quality teachers.
- Instead they are spending it in on prisons
- Their priorities aren't straight.
- Education vs. Prisons
- What gets the priority?
- On March 30th of this year, I vetoed House Bill 1611 – the State Department of Education's Minimum Program Bill.
- I did so because it was flawed – because it robbed Peter to pay Paul – because it did not make education a priority.
- The Minimum Program is the basic funding mechanisms for teacher salaries, transportation costs, health insurance and other school needs.
- The legislature should have funded the first year of the teacher pay raise plan by amending the salary schedule in code 37-19-17 in order to give teachers the first year pay raise.
- They did not do that.
- The teacher pay raise should not be a supplement – it should be permanent.
- I said back then it was flawed and was going to cause this problem.
- The Legislature's refusal to remove the 5% requirement means the pay raises aren't permanent.

- Because of their actions, the legislature has forced some school districts to have teachers sign waivers stating that they understood the money was not being appropriated as a salary pay raise, but instead as a state supplement.
- That means because of the legislators actions, our teachers are not guaranteed a pay raise in the future.
- The legislature has played games with our teachers.
- They've played games with our children's education.
- They are playing games with all of us.
- I have told our teachers that I would continue to fight for the removal of the 5% growth rate provision and make their pay raises permanent.
- And I will.
- I will continue to fight on behalf of education.
- I will continue to fight on behalf of our children.
- I will continue to fight on behalf of our teachers.