

*Remarks for the
Tim Ford Tree Planting Ceremony
March 25, 2003*

- Recognize Gary, Rep. Green, MG
Lipscomb, Mr. Hilliard, Speaker Pro Tem
Clark, Tuck

This is one of many events that I'm sure will be held in the coming weeks and months honoring Speaker Tim Ford. I know there's a roast for him tomorrow night, and I promise we won't be offering a sneak preview here today – however tempting that may be.

Today, we are gathering to present a lasting reminder of the man who has had such an influence on the work done in the Capitol building over the past 23 years.

The magnolia tree will be a reflection of the public service career of Tim Ford – starting out young and thin, eventually growing to be round and powerful.

I have had the honor and the pleasure of working closely with Speaker Ford, as both lieutenant governor and as governor. His commitment to the people of Mississippi, and to the fulfillment of our state's promise and potential, cannot be denied.

His is not an easy job. The speaker of the House must be a builder of bridges, a master of negotiations, and a visionary with a focus on the end result. In short, he must be a leader.

In his 23 years as a representative, and his 15 years as speaker, Tim Ford has been a leader. He has demonstrated his dedication to making a difference for our state, and his work has paid off.

His leadership has helped us to move Mississippi forward, and we are thankful.

He has also set a new standard for leaders in other states, as one of the longest-serving speakers in the nation. He has shared his talents beyond our borders, offering advice and counsel to legislator across America, and I know they are thankful.

There isn't much time left in this regular session, and I know Speaker Ford is counting the days.

But, I know he will never be far from this building or those who serve in it. And when he isn't around here, this tree will stand as a reminder of his work – and of our appreciation.

Thank you, Tim.