

*Remarks for the
Tourism Press Conference
May 1, 2002*

Good morning. Thank you all for coming to this important event. First, I want to welcome our tourism partners from across the state joining us today.

Since the tragedies of September 11 last year, National Tourism Week 2002 has been raised to a new level of significance.

Now, more than ever, we have the opportunity to emphasize and promote a better understanding of the importance of travel and tourism as a major industry in our country, and in Mississippi.

This is a vital industry and provides economic stability and growth to our nation. With over \$584 billion in annual expenditures nationwide, and over \$6 billion in Mississippi alone, tourism is an important part of our business community.

National Tourism Week was created to give communities and the tourism industry a chance to discuss the economic impact of tourism and travel, and to show appreciation for the travelers and employees who work in this industry.

Today, I want to say thank you to all of the tourism partners across our state for their continued efforts to promote Mississippi as a major tourism destination state.

The Mississippi Development Authority is serious about tourism and economic development. The more than 94,000 jobs created in the tourism industry, along with its economic impact, is extremely valuable to our state.

Through the MDA's Tourism Division, along with convention and visitors bureaus and tourism councils statewide, we will be celebrating National Tourism Week in Mississippi, May 4-12.

Each year, those communities and states that depend on tourism for their economic well-being take time to celebrate this important week. This is our opportunity to highlight the tourism industry in Mississippi and its importance to our economy.

It is also an opportunity to make our citizens aware of the organizations that market and promote Mississippi statewide, to the nation and to the world.

I'm proud that through our partnerships in tourism, over 34 million people visited our state last year. People are realizing that Mississippi has vast historical, cultural and entertainment venues to enjoy.

In honor of the upcoming National Tourism Week, we are thrilled to launch a new promotional program to attract even more visitors to our state next year.

Mississippi is embarking on a new tourism slogan that brands our state for future development in this important industry.

It is my pleasure to announce our new tourism tag line which will be used in MDA's future advertising and promotional efforts.

The new tagline for our great state is "Mississippi...Feels Like Coming Home".

Thank you, and now I would like to introduce Darienne Wilson, the director of our tourism division at the Mississippi Development Authority to give you some further details.

Darienne will share with you today some insights into the development of this new tag line and how the Mississippi Development Authority will use this important message to market our state to the world.

(Darienne speaks, then introduces the band to sing the new “Feels Like Coming Home” song. After the song, open the floor for questions).