

*Remarks for the
USA Funds Announcement
December 6, 2002*

(recognize Dan Franklin / Carl Dalstrom)

We've been doing a lot of work lately in Mississippi, work focused on making the most of our promise and potential. As you well know, I believe our best vehicle for accomplishing that work is through our educational system.

Thousands of Mississippi students receive financial aid each year through our institutions of higher learning. The loans that go out to those students help them pay for schooling, but I also see them as an investment in our collective future.

The system for providing those loans demands certain safeguards, and chief among them is a guarantor for the loans. Today, we are here to announce that United States Aid Funds, commonly known as USA Funds, is being designated as the guarantor of Mississippi student loans.

We have been negotiating with USA Funds for the past two years to establish a relationship that would benefit us both, and I'm proud to say those negotiations have been very successful.

With USA Funds as the official guarantor of our student loans, we are doing more than just putting protections in place. We are creating jobs.

USA Funds, as part of their business, subcontracts with Sallie Mae to manage the default loans in the system. Under our new agreement, Sallie Mae will also subcontract with Franklin Collection Service here in Tupelo to actually collect payments on defaulted loans.

This partnership will mean the creation of 50 new jobs in Tupelo at Franklin Collection Service. In fact, today we will be breaking ground on an expansion of their office to make room for their new employees.

And, as an additional bit of good news, Franklin will subcontract with Lee Abraham of Abraham & Abraham in Greenwood – creating more jobs in the Delta.

It's an amazing partnership, one that builds on the services provided to meet the needs of the state and our students, and to take us closer to our promise and potential.

I want to thank Carl Dalstrom and his staff at USA Funds for their commitment to making this relationship work. Special recognition also needs to go out to Suzanne Sharp with the state's Institutions of Higher Learning; Dan Franklin, Mitch Beard and the staff of Franklin Collection Service; Lee Abraham, and of course, Carl Dalstrom and his staff at USA Funds.

(sign the executive order – it's official!)