

WLOX Television Interview
Friday, March 10, 2000
1:50 p.m.
Room 213 State Capitol

* Remember to sit up straight. Speak slowly. Speak in low tones. The interview will last approximately 13 minutes.

*Remember – this is a Coast television station that has a relatively large satellite reach. They want to discuss state budget, teacher pay, the legislature and I am sure that they will bring up your appointment of Oliver Diaz to the Supreme Court. They may ask about other South Mississippi appointments.

* The following is a list of potential topics and responses for you to consider.

Four-Year University on the Coast

- The Mississippi Gulf Coast is large enough to sustain a four-year university.
- Providing the people of the Gulf Coast with the option of attaining their four-year degree at home rather than going out-of-state is a smart choice.
- We are currently working to reprioritize the budget to provide the funding to support the formation of USM Gulf Coast.
- Having a four-year university on the coast would produce a better workforce pool for Coast industries and businesses to have the option to hire. It is a win-win situation both for the students and for the businesses in the southern portion of the state.

University/Junior College Classes on Gaming - (House Bill 881 failed on 3-9-00 but there is a motion to reconsider.)

- I am not in favor of having state institutions or community/junior colleges teach courses to train or teach gaming employees. The courses I would rather see our universities focus on in the area of tourism are management and Hotel, Restaurant Tourism.
- The workforce that is needed to fill vacancies in gaming is being addressed by private schools that provide specialized instruction for that one particular field.

Teacher Pay

- I am disappointed that the legislature has not placed raising teacher pay as a priority this legislative session; however, we are continuing to work to encourage the legislators to take action before the end of this legislative session.
- Raising teacher pay was one of the issues that I campaigned on and it is still my top priority.
- We are continuing to work our plan to raise the pay for our teachers. We will not be told that it can't be done.
- Mississippi teachers need our commitment. Teacher pay must remain a priority.

- The Southeastern average is not too much to pay for Mississippi teachers who work tirelessly to develop the future leaders of our state.
- I have said from the beginning of my administration that the plan that I have suggested to the Legislature to bring Mississippi teachers salaries up to the Southeastern Average is a multi-year plan that if followed, will meet that goal in four years.
- We cannot afford to wait on this critical issue. The time to invest in our children is now.

Education

- The thing that is going to make a difference to our people is to offer them quality education.
- We are working to provide a multitude of educational tools for children that will increase their opportunities to learn thus increasing their chances to be successful and productive citizens
- Wednesday of this week I announced the formation of a Classroom Technology Task Force. This task force has been charged with the challenge of placing an Internet-accessible computer in every public elementary and secondary classroom in Mississippi by the end of 2002.

- The men and women on the task force are representative of the people of our state. They are educators, business people, foundation representatives and parents, with one common goal of working together to increase the resources available to the students of Mississippi.

Appointments

- On Thursday I appointed Justice Oliver Diaz to the Mississippi Supreme Court.
- Justice Diaz is from the Coast and served in the Mississippi House of Representatives from District 116 representing Biloxi and D'Iberville.
- He was also city attorney for the City of D'Iberville.
- He will bring experience, honesty and integrity with him into this position and I have great faith in his ability.

Transportation

- The 1987 highway program has been a tremendous benefit to economic development efforts all over the state.
- J. C. Burns and the staff of MDECD is working with Coast officials on more effective ways to connect north-south traffic with I-10 for tourism purposes and a 30th Avenue route into the Port of Gulfport to isolate commercial truck traffic from tourism traffic.

- We are always looking for new solutions to transportation issues and we are listening to the needs of the people along with their suggestions for meeting those needs.

Economic Development

- Economic Development is a priority for my administration.
- In all aspects of economic and community development, public and private sectors must communicate with one another and work together. I am co-chairing the Mississippi Partnership for Economic Development with Dwight Evans of Mississippi Power.
- Education and workforce development are so closely connected to economic and community development that really does not work well without the other.

Endorsement of Vice President Al Gore

- Vice President Gore is from a neighboring state, and we believe that he will be mindful of the issues that are of concern to the people of Mississippi when he makes decisions that will directly affect us.
- Vice President Gore knows the complexity of the legislative process in Washington and I am encouraged by his years of experience.

