

*Remarks for the
Institute for Disabilities Studies Press Conference
March 6, 2002*

Good afternoon. Mississippi is demonstrating its ability to compete with anyone, anytime, and that ability is grounded in the belief that every Mississippian has a talent to share with our state and our society.

The youth of our state have a wealth of talent to offer, and it is important for us to ensure all youth – including those with disabilities – make the most of those talents.

Students with disabilities in our state are less likely than those without disabilities to earn a high school diploma. They're less likely to receive job training or attend college.

Yet, we cannot afford to allow the gifts and potential they have to remain untapped.

Today, I am proud to help announce the awarding of a two-year, \$500,000 grant from the U. S. Department of Labor to the Institute for Disability Studies.

This grant will be used to improve the efforts of Workforce Investment Area youth programs to recruit and serve youths with disabilities around the state. With this new funding support, the Institute will help provide training and technical assistance statewide.

Operating as the YES Project, the Institute is going to work with state agencies such as the Mississippi Development Authority, the Department of Rehabilitation Services and the Department of Education.

Our work to move Mississippi forward succeeds only when all Mississippians are working with us. With business and industry placing a greater emphasis on communications skills and work experience, the mission is clear.

In the end, it's important for us to know our limits – but never stop trying to exceed them. That's how we – as a state – will achieve our goals.

I'd like to ask Royal Walker, Jr., Associate Director for the Institute for Disability Studies and Project Director for YES, to say a few words. Royal?

(Royal Walker speaks)

We'd be glad to take your questions now.