

*Remarks for the
Youth ChalleNGe Program Graduation
December 14, 2002*

- Recognize General Lipscomb / leadership of MS National Guard
 - Nation looks to MS when it needs the best
- Want to take a minute to talk about the Guard / MS's citizen soldiers
 - Men and women of the Guard give of time and energy to serve
- Have proven themselves around the world / war against terrorism
 - Guarding al-Qaeda prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba
 - Supported the peace by serving in Bosnia
- Proud of our soldiers with the Youth Challenge program
- Spoke to the graduating class last June / told them it wasn't first time to attend one of these graduations and wouldn't be my last / I keep my promises.
- This program does so much for MS's greatest resource
 - The young men and women sitting here today, ready to go on with their education or enter the workforce
- Youth Challenge Program offers much to our state / nation
 - Offers young people an opportunity, a new start, a chance to redirect lives toward positive and exciting goals
- Be aware of your obligations / responsibilities
 - Wealth of potential in you / don't allow it to be wasted
 - MS deserves better / families deserve better / you deserve better
- Working hard to build MS / make most of your promise and potential
 - Setting new standard of leadership
 - Recruiting and retaining jobs / 1st in nation with Internet-accessible computer in every public school classroom
- Making an investment in you
 - Shortchange that investment, shortchange future / not an acceptable alternative
- You will be standard-bearers for the next generation
 - Confident progress will continue

- Camp Shelby / one of the largest military training facilities in the nation
- You've worked closely with soldiers / seen discipline and focus in their work

- They're charged with defending a nation
 - I charge you to help build our nation
 - You have skills and talent / make the best of your gifts

- When America needs its very best, she looks to MS's citizen soldiers
 - There's a reason for that

- We've set a standard of excellence
 - Trained, worked, prepared for call to action
 - When called, answered with enthusiasm / commitment to serve

- As graduates of the Youth Challenge Program, also set a standard of excellence
 - Trained, worked, prepared for your call to action / call to action is now

- Calling on you to take what you've learned
 - Take the discipline, knowledge and sense of confidence
 - Let it loose in MS

- Go to school or work / give back to your communities
 - Be responsible / keep minds and bodies strong
 - Be the leaders that you are

- Visited with soldiers at Camp Shelby / Fort Benning / Bosnia
 - They're the best of the best at what they do

- Today, begin proving that you're the best of the best as well
 - Can't build reputation as best if you just talk
 - Must work hard / how the Mississippi National Guard earned its reputation as the best
 - That's how you'll earn yours.

- Whatever path, make it honorable
 - Stay focused on doing what's right.

- Do that, you honor what you've done to make it here today
 - Honor all of us here with you – families, friends, Governor, soldiers

- Old saying: if opportunity doesn't knock, build a door
 - You've got skills to not only build the door, but to step through to a bright and hopeful future

- Proud of you / families proud of you / with good reason
 - You've earned pride / job now is to keep it.

God bless you and good luck.