

SMALL BUSINESS COLUMN

By Governor Ronnie Musgrove

Through the Advantage Mississippi Initiative, our new blueprint for economic development, we are strategically focused to help existing businesses and to attract new businesses seeking expansions or new locations. Recently the Small Business Survival Committee named Mississippi as one of the top ten states in the 2002 Small Business Survival Index, ranking Mississippi as having a strong policy environment for entrepreneurship. We are committed to assisting our small businesses to grow and flourish so that we can build good schools, good communities and good jobs for our citizens.

In my State of the State address, I outlined a new program to help small businesses in our rural areas. Through the Mississippi Rural Economic Impact Authority, \$20 million would be committed to areas that have experienced heavy job losses. Through this funding, we can train and retrain our citizens for new and better jobs and provide opportunities for growth for smaller businesses throughout the state. Our small businesses need and deserve every opportunity possible to expand their operations, bring new products to market, and employ our hard working citizens.

Nationwide, 76.5 percent of the new net jobs were created by small businesses and it is no different in Mississippi. We must continue to support and promote our small business base and create new and viable initiatives to help them succeed. Through the Mississippi Development Authority's Existing Industry Division, businesses can receive technical assistance for creating new business plans, outline business strategies to increase sales and bring products to market, and seek opportunities for additional funding mechanisms.

In Mississippi, we must provide strong support for our small businesses so they can realize the American dream...to own a home, build a business and provide our families with a high quality of life. As Governor, I will continue to listen to business needs and to support programs and services that support our small businesses across the state. Our small businesses are the backbone of Mississippi, and it is incumbent upon us to help our businesses succeed.