

Working Together for a Safer Mississippi

The State of Mississippi has an agenda, and you can help us create a safer Mississippi. You can encourage your legislators to pass legislation that promotes programs for safer communities, safer homes and safer roads in Mississippi.

We are here to work for you and your involvement helps. Public safety is one of the top priorities of my administration, and we have many opportunities in Mississippi to make our state a safer place to live, work and raise a family.

In 1999, more than 1/3 of the traffic fatalities in Mississippi were alcohol related. We must continue our vigilance on Mississippi roads to drive this gruesome statistic down. We are simply losing too many Mississippians needlessly, senselessly. We cannot eliminate drunk drivers, but we can make the penalties tougher. We can lower our allowable blood alcohol limit.

The federal government has mandated states lower their blood alcohol limit or face losing much-needed dollars for highway construction. Mississippi cannot risk losing any federal money. I am encouraging our legislators to respond to this mandate and lower the BAC to .08.

Our roads are busier than at any time in our state's history. We commute more. We have an increasing number of tourists. Wearing a seatbelt just isn't optional anymore. Look at the statistics. In 1999, three times as many drivers and passengers killed in auto accidents were not wearing seat belts as those who were wearing them. It's simple, wearing a seat belt increases the likelihood of surviving an accident.

I urge the Mississippi Legislature to make the failure to use seat belts a primary offense. Let's get serious about highway safety. It's too important.

We must continue to make advancements in public safety through the reduction of illegal narcotic trafficking. The Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics has created three new district offices and added over 30 narcotics investigators this year, without an increase to its budget. Also, Mississippi became the first state in the nation to implement a 5-year strategic drug plan. In the short time it has been employed, over 25-targeted kingpin drug organizations in Mississippi have been disrupted or dismantled. Their proactive decisions are helping make Mississippi an even safer place to live and visit.

For the first time in fifteen years, the State of Mississippi's Department of Corrections is in compliance with prison overcrowding. In less than a three-month period of time, the Department brought prison population into compliance for the state, and has now developed a long-term solution to prison overcrowding in our state. This department has worked tirelessly to bring Mississippi into compliance and has searched for new and innovative ways to better manage our correction system.

The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency is working with local officials across the state to ensure that our communities have local emergency management officials working to assist communities in preparation for disasters. Since January of 2000, eleven new local emergency management agencies have been established across the state.

Working together we can make it happen. These are the basics: safer streets, safer neighborhoods and safer homes equal a safer Mississippi. We all have a stake in our communities. Let's make it happen.