

## **Advantage Mississippi Initiative Working for Mississippians**

“Our first commitment is to customer satisfaction.” This statement from Nissan echoes our commitment to Mississippians. To create training and retraining opportunities by implementing the Advantage Mississippi Initiative (AMI) and creating job opportunities with the location of Nissan to Mississippi, we are providing opportunities for more Mississippians to have a better quality of life.

We are putting programs created by the AMI into place. Last week, the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) appointed Gennie Lacy Jones as the Director of Minority Business Division of MDA. Under her direction, this division will promote the growth and development of minority-owned businesses in Mississippi.

The Advantage Mississippi Initiative works for every person in every county of our state, and it works for all Mississippians. Thousands of Mississippi companies answered Nissan’s call for applications and took advantage of this new opportunity. Over one million hits were recorded on the [www.MississippiAndNissan](http://www.MississippiAndNissan) website, more than 5,350 applications were downloaded and 2,200 Mississippi companies sent in applications to Nissan.

The new jobs created by these supplier companies means more Mississippians can make their choice to live, work and raise their families at home, here in Mississippi. This is an outstanding opportunity for the citizens of Mississippi. Nissan will directly create 4000 new jobs for people in and around Canton, MS, but the supplier opportunities have the potential to benefit the entire state.

As Mississippians prepare to supply Nissan, we are also preparing our students and work force for jobs at Nissan and other companies that will locate in our state. Our workforce must be trained and ready for immediate employment opportunities. We are making those opportunities available through our new One-Stop Centers.

One-Stop Centers are convenient locations where job seekers and employers can get information about and access to a wide array of employment and job training services. These centers are part of the Workforce Investment Act, and they are designed to improve employment, training, literacy and vocational rehabilitation programs throughout the state.

Currently, Mississippi colleges and universities are preparing our workforce. Programs, such as the engineering schools at Jackson State University and Mississippi State University, are creating the high tech employees needed by high tech companies. We must continue to stay ahead of the curve by providing educational opportunities that will keep us prepared for the future.

If we stop the momentum created by the AMI with a budget cut, then Mississippians will be back at square one. We are recommending \$10 million more than the Joint Legislative Budget Committee for Fiscal Year 2002 for economic development. We must continue to support programs that give our people the opportunity for more, new, high-paying jobs. The AMI has made Mississippi competitive, and we must continue to succeed.

In order for Mississippi to continue providing incentives and opportunities for businesses to move to Mississippi, we must not cut our budget. We must prioritize our budget.

We are looking for creative solutions that will meet our state's budget needs. One solution we have presented to the Legislature is a proposal to efficiently use the AMS settlement funds we have at our disposal. Using these funds now, for one-time expenditures, will put Mississippi back on track. We need to take advantage of this resource, and make it work for the people of Mississippi.

We are committed to making Mississippi an even better place to live, work and visit for our people. Working together, we are accomplishing this goal.