

MEMORANDUM

February 12, 2002

TO: Governor

FROM: John

RE: Budget cuts announcement

CC: Renick
Phillip
Lee Ann

It is common knowledge that budget cuts are going to be made sometime this week. The question is, when do we want to announce them and how do we announce them? Phillip and I have talked about two different scenarios.

Scenario #1:

We hold a press conference in the second floor rotunda at the Capital. Presently, a press conference is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, February 13, at 10:30 a.m. Joining you at the press conference would be Gary Anderson and any educators and business people we can get. With this scenario, it is important visually to have a diverse group of people there to speak to the cuts and the forces that have made them necessary. It is vital that these people have the proper briefing and knowledge of the issue; they must also have our message down pat.

A press conference in the rotunda would also be a fairly direct jab at the Legislature. By doing this the day before the Thursday deadline for original floor action, are we putting anything at risk?

By using this scenario, we would have the rest of the week to spin the story; however, this also takes the focus off your message events on the Coast and in DeSoto County.

Scenario #2:

Gary Anderson puts out a press release sometime this week. This method takes the focus off you as the bearer of bad news. We would want various educators and business people ready to respond to the release. This would give the media credible statements to use and still support our message. Further, releasing the cuts on Friday afternoon would help minimize the coverage of the story.

Reporters and the public know the cuts are coming, they just don't know when. As painful as the cuts are, we should be able to minimize the coverage by timing the release properly.

In the end, I would suggest the second scenario because it doesn't allow your message events regarding jobs and economic development to be overshadowed by the bad news of budget cuts that everyone knows is inevitable.