

## **Governor's Column – 6/23/02**

There's an old saying that "many an opportunity is lost because of time spent looking for four-leaf clovers."

Not here. We're always looking for opportunities and, in the times when we don't see them, we're creating them. That's how we're moving Mississippi ahead.

The news for the past week has focused on the expansion of the Nissan facility, and the fact that Nissan wants to expand in Mississippi before their original facility is even finished speaks volumes about what we're doing here.

Perhaps it's because the project is ahead of schedule and under budget. Perhaps it's because we've demonstrate our ability to compete at the highest levels.

The expansion also sends a strong message about the business climate in our state.

For all the publicity surrounding the Nissan project, however, the expansion of jobs around the state has been occurring on a regular basis. We've been creating jobs in the midst of a national recession, something that we can look to with pride.

We may not be able to control what's happening on Wall Street, but we can work as hard as possible to affect what happens on Main Street. The work we do with a small business is just as important as the work we do with a company like Nissan.

There is an on-going effort to sell Mississippi to new businesses. The recruitment process never stops, and it is important for us to be ready to go anywhere in the world to promote the state. It is in growing our existing businesses, however, that we will always experience our greatest success, and the numbers in this category speak for themselves.

Over the course of the past two years, over 21,000 new jobs have been created in the state. Of those jobs, more than 17,000 came from the expansion of existing businesses.

Looking back to January 2002, here's a snapshot of what's been done: Northrop Grumman Ship Systems in Harrison County added 520 new jobs. Lane Home Furnishings in Lee County added 400 new jobs.

The Alcoa plant in DeSoto County was targeted for closure, but we worked with the company and convinced them to stay. The end result was an expansion of their facility through a \$17 million capital investment and 200 additional jobs.

When Whirlpool was looking to consolidate its operations, it decided to close facilities in Canada and other areas and expand its operation in Oxford. The \$10 million capital investment there led to 150 new jobs.

The list goes on, but for the first two months of this year alone, 60 companies expanded their facilities. These expansions represented a total capital investment of more than \$286 million and 1,204 jobs.

Again, this is strong evidence about the business climate in Mississippi.

The work of growing Mississippi doesn't stop, even during a national recession. When times are tough, that's when we have our chance to show what we can do.

We're not spending our time looking for four-leaf clovers; we'll leave that to somebody else. There are too many opportunities for us to create on our own.