

Governor's Column 9/1/01

It's Labor Day Weekend, and people across the state and the country are looking forward to a long, three-day holiday.

This weekend traditionally marks the shift from summer to fall, from vacation to work and school. Football season's getting underway, and hopefully baseball season's going to continue on into the fall. And, in the midst of the fun of the weekend, please remember to buckle up and most importantly, don't drink and drive.

While it's fun to have a long weekend to close out the summer, we shouldn't forget the meaning behind the Labor Day Holiday. Since its official adoption as a national holiday by Congress in 1894, Labor Day has been about the men and women who work to build America.

The look of the workforce has changed somewhat over the past 108 years, but the spirit of the workforce is stronger than ever. Americans are proud people, and with good reason.

Here in Mississippi, that pride rings true today. We're working hard to build this state, to create quality, well-paying jobs so families can put food on their tables, clothes on their backs and a roof over their heads.

We should be proud of the fact that nearly 36,000 new jobs have been created in the past two years, and 17,000 of them have been through the expansion of existing businesses. The latest figures from the Mississippi Development Authority show that, just from the beginning of this year, 133 businesses have announced expansions that will generate over 4,500 new jobs.

People around the world are watching and listening to what we do.

They've been listening halfway around the world in Japan at the world headquarters for Nissan, where the final decision to build a \$1 billion plant was made two years ago.

We reinforced that new image of Mississippi when the decision was made to expand the Nissan plant with an additional \$500 million investment. This expansion was announced before the first phase was even finished – a strong demonstration of Nissan's confidence in doing business here. The second phase means Mississippi is gaining another 1,300 jobs and taking another step forward in building its future.

People here at home are watching and listening as well. Our investment in existing Mississippi businesses such as Howard Industries is vitally important. We are committed to helping companies with roots in our soil to grow and expand, and the 2,000 new jobs created by that commitment will benefit us all.

Whether it's two men in a truck or 5,000 people building a truck, economic development is important for Mississippi.

This weekend, we celebrate Labor Day. In reality, it's something we should celebrate every day. It's about building communities, strengthening economies, creating opportunities, and energizing the sense of confidence that comes with work.

“Even in the meanest sorts of labor,” Thomas Carlyle wrote, “the whole soul of a man is composed into a kind of real harmony the instant he sets himself to work.”

There's a harmony to what we're doing in Mississippi, and a harmony heard by the rest of the world.