

## **Mississippi Teachers' Salaries To Reach Southeastern Average**

“Raising teacher pay to the southeastern average is the most critical issue facing the people of Mississippi” – a statement made time and time again by Governor Ronnie Musgrove during his campaign to pass a teacher pay raise bill during the 2000 Legislative Session.

“If we are not paying competitive salaries for our teachers, they will leave Mississippi to find jobs in other states or leave the field of teaching all together,” said the Governor. “Our children deserve the best teachers and the best teaching resources available, and it is our responsibility to make both available to them. They deserve our commitment to education.”

On Monday, May 1, 2000 Governor Musgrove was joined by the Lt. Governor, the Speaker of the House and members of the House and Senate as he signed the teacher pay raise bill into law.

Mississippi must be competitive in our schools so we can be competitive in the job market. Better schools equal better jobs.

In order for Mississippi to be competitive with other states when it comes to attracting business and industry we must have a workforce that is superiorly educated. The workforce of tomorrow is filled by the children of today, and those children demand the best education that Mississippi can provide.

“We knew that it was critical that we pay our teachers, and those people considering entering the teaching profession, competitive salaries so they can afford to share their knowledge and wisdom with our children,” said the Governor.

This teacher pay raise plan is a bold step for the people of Mississippi. “We are committed to education in Mississippi, and we are showing that commitment to the people of our state and to the nation,” said the Governor.

## **New Outreach Plan Providing Health Insurance For Mississippi Children**

More than 85,000 children in the state of Mississippi are eligible to receive health insurance benefits through the Mississippi Health Benefits Program. Mississippi Health Benefits provides health insurance to Mississippi children whose parents are caught in the gap between making too much money to be eligible for Medicaid but not enough to afford health insurance.

When Governor Musgrove took office in January 2000, fewer than 525 Mississippi children were enrolled in the Children's Health Insurance Plan (CHIP). "Too many families don't know that they are eligible for the Mississippi Health Benefits Program," said Governor Musgrove. "It is the goal of this administration to find ways to enroll every eligible child in Mississippi."

The Governor's Office worked with the Department of Human Services, the Division of Medicaid and the Department of Finance and Administration to develop a new advertising and outreach plan of action. New partnerships have been formed to reach more Mississippi families with information about this health insurance option. The Mississippi Hospital Association volunteered to place applications in hospitals across the state. The Department of Education and the Governor's office partnered to bring schools into the enrollment effort. A school will receive \$20.00 for every child they successfully enroll in the program. This incentive program allows schools to use the money they earn for school needs. The Department of Health has enlisted its 2,500 employees to help spread the message. Their employees will wear lapel buttons that advertise the plan.

Partnerships continue to form and we continue to enroll our children and give them the health insurance they desperately need. "Our administration will not rest until every eligible child is enrolled," said the Governor.

