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**“Opportunities for Economic Growth and Development”**

We are working to make more opportunities available for everyone in Mississippi. Mississippi is ripe for growth. We are poised to compete; we are poised to succeed.

We have a bold, new plan for economic growth in our state. The impact of the Advantage Mississippi Initiative (AMI) has already been measured by the success of attracting Nissan. The AMI laid that groundwork, attracting Nissan to Mississippi. It is a comprehensive plan that helps all 82 counties, rural and urban, agricultural and industrial.

The Nissan project was in the top 1% investment opportunities in the nation in 2000. Many people thought Mississippi did not have a fighting chance at landing Nissan. We proved them wrong, and we will find more ways to show the nation that Mississippi is a competitor in all areas.

The Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) is working to find new ways to bring rural Mississippi to the forefront by recognizing the impact of small, local businesses. With the new Capital Access Program, more Mississippi entrepreneurs will have access to the resources they need to start small businesses across our state. Small businesses and entrepreneurs remain an integral part of economic growth in Mississippi.

The Minority Business Division of MDA recently appointed a new director, Gennie Lacy Jones. Jones' knowledge and experience will be invaluable in the process of taking this division in a new direction. This division will support and foster new business opportunities in our state.

Through the AMI a Rural Development Office is being established with the responsibility of targeting smaller communities and manufacturers. MDA is organizing that division now. Small businesses and entrepreneurs remain an integral part of economic growth in Mississippi. But some of those people who could prosper from knowing about economic development projects don't get the support they need. The Rural Development Office will fill that need.

By maximizing specific capabilities and assets, the On-TARGET Community Certification Program can assist local communities recruit, retain and grow businesses tailored to their communities. We help them help themselves by looking at the resources of the people of the community and matching them with businesses that fit.

The world is taking notice, and we must continue to spread the word about Mississippi. It is important how our neighbors, our nation and the world view Mississippi. How Mississippi is perceived affects our economic success. We have the opportunity to promote a positive image of Mississippi. Mississippians are excited about the opportunities that await us, and we must spread that enthusiasm.

Mississippi can, Mississippi is and Mississippi will continue to grow and find more opportunities for everyone in our state. Mississippi can reach its greatest potential. We are working to make Mississippi an even better place to live, work and visit. Together, we are making Mississippi “America’s State of Promise.”