

October 23, 2001

To the Members of the Mississippi Association of State Employees:

While I cannot be with you tonight, please know how much I appreciate the tremendous work you do each and every day for the people of our great state. This work can and must be recognized through better salaries and better benefits, and that is my goal.

On July 26, I unveiled a proposal to use part of the payments from the tobacco settlement to address the health care needs of the people of Mississippi. A major part of this proposal regards improving your health insurance, making it work better for you and your families. For too long, the burden of health insurance has been placed on you. The deficit in the health insurance plan has been reduced by raising your premiums and changing your benefits. In recent years, the average employee's out-of-pocket costs has increased nearly 79%. The average plan payment per employee has increased 27%. This will stop.

Under the plan I have proposed, we will eliminate the deductible for doctor visits, reduce dependent costs, and institute a co-pay plan to lower your out-of-pocket costs for doctor visits and prescription drugs. State employees deserve quality health insurance at a reasonable price, and I will make sure they get it.

Lower health insurance costs mean you take home more pay each month. Improving Mississippi's health care by using tobacco revenue also offers opportunities to increase that pay even more. You know my position on this issue, and you know I will work to secure the pay raise you deserve.

Thank you for your commitment to our state and our people. It is time for that commitment to be returned in-kind. We will make it happen.

Sincerely,

Governor Ronnie Musgrove  
State of Mississippi