

*Remarks for  
North MS Access to Health Care Press Conference  
October 13, 2003*

- Access to affordable health care is a top concern of mine as Governor of the State of Mississippi.
- Everyone needs a hospital to go to.
- Healthy children go to school ready to learn, ready to succeed, ready to make the most of their promise and potential.
- Healthy adults are more productive and are better prepared to face the future to create a stronger workforce.
- One of the key elements to ensuring that we are healthy is to have access to affordable health care.
- Recently, contract negotiations between NMMC and BCBS broke down.

- To keep health care cost down for everyday Mississippians, it is essential to re-energize contract negotiations between these parties.
- Today, we are rolling up our sleeves to insure that Mississippians continue to have access to affordable health care in rural Mississippi.
- After speaking with Rick Hale Of Blue Cross and Blue Shield and Mickey Holliman of North Mississippi Medical Center, I am encouraging them to complete their negotiations.
- To assist with negotiations and to ensure that the people of NE MS have the access to affordable health care, I have offered

the appointment of an outside professional mediator to assist.

- Our priorities must include health care for all of our citizens.
- If a person has health insurance, they need to have access to a hospital.
- In this instance, NMMC offers outstanding medical care. BCBS is one of our largest health care insurance providers.
- These contracts need to be completed, negotiations need to be resolved, people need to have access to a hospital in north Mississippi.
- I will be glad to answer any questions that you may have.