

*Remarks to the  
Distinguished Citizen Award Dinner (Boy Scouts)  
March 25, 2002*

Thank you, Bill. I am honored and flattered to receive this award – it means a great deal to be recognized in this way.

*(tell story of lawyer on plane to DC; not being recognized as Governor)*

Whether it's one lawyer on a plane or one thousand people who read an article in The New York Times about what we're doing here, people are learning that Mississippi is changing.

They're learning that we're doing business in a different way.

They're learning that we're being recognized for our forward-thinking approaches to education.

We're doing great work for the state of Mississippi. Great things are happening in our state. We are capturing the attention of the world outside our borders because of the exciting things we've got going on, and I'm sure you will agree that it's good for Mississippi to be recognized for being on the cutting edge.

As Governor, I have a responsibility to each of you here tonight and every citizen of this state – a responsibility to lead and to serve to the best of my ability.

I have objectives and goals for Mississippi, just as the Boy Scouts do with the three “Aims of Scouting” – participating in citizenship, growth in moral strength and character, and development in physical, mental and emotional fitness.

Participating in citizenship is, in my view, an obligation of every American. If we are to help our state and our nation reach the full promise of their potential, then we must be active participants in the process.

One of the effects of the tragedies of September 11 has been the unification of America. It seems that, as a nation, we have responded to that fateful day by coming together in a manner that really demonstrates the principles we stand for.

We have new challenges before us. How we respond to those challenges depends on how we work together as Americans – and I know we will overcome them. We will do it because we have a common commitment and a shared dedication to the values that make us Americans.

How we participate in the process determines the success of our efforts – and I know your participation as scouts and as citizens can always be counted on.

When your participation is partnered with strength of character, our level of success moves even higher.

It's been said that character is what we do when we think no one's looking. To those scouts here this evening – young and old – I want to thank you for setting a standard for others to follow, a standard of hard work and leadership.

Tom Peters, author of “In Search of Excellence,” wrote that “leaders don't create followers, they create more leaders.”

Scouting does that, and Mississippi needs that – especially as we build and grow in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In my State of the State address in January, I outlined four priorities for our state – jobs, education, health care and public safety.

We're making strong progress on each one.

Mississippi is growing like never before. In the past two years, during a national recession, we've created more than 21,000 jobs and attracted over \$6 billion in new investments.

*Site Selection* magazine, one of the top trade publications in the economic development industry, ranked Mississippi as one of the top ten states for its “Governor’s Cup” award.

The perception of Mississippi is changing. The old question of “Why Mississippi?” doesn’t get asked anymore. The question now is, “Why *not* Mississippi?”

And the answer is, because we can compete with anyone, anytime, anywhere.

We have put together the most aggressive economic development package in the nation, with the Advantage Mississippi Initiative.

We're committed to building Mississippi and making sure it achieves its promise and potential. Our people deserve nothing less.

Advantage Mississippi has done much for the state.

It's probably most well-known for its use in bringing Nissan to the state. And, as we follow "March Madness" and the road to the Final Four, it helped carry us to our own final four with the Hyundai project.

Mississippi is being considered for projects that, in previous years, would never look at us as a potential location.

Again, "why not Mississippi?"

Advantage Mississippi is not only used to attract new business; it's also a wonderful means of retaining business.

Case in point: The Alcoa facility in Hernando was scheduled to close. The plant was going to cease operations and move to Mexico.

We stepped in and, with incentives available through Advantage Mississippi, convinced Alcoa to stay here.

Not only are they staying here, they are moving ahead with a \$16 million expansion that will double the size of their workforce to 500 jobs.

That's how we're able to compete.

Northeast Mississippi offers so many opportunities for new and expanding businesses, and we want to make the most of those opportunities.

Another case in point: Whirlpool Corporation announced last week they are closing a manufacturing facility in Quebec, Canada, and eliminating about 500 jobs.

Where are those jobs going?

About 150 of them are going to an existing Whirlpool facility in Oxford. That speaks volumes for what we're doing, and sends a strong message throughout the economic development community and industry as a whole.

With the increasing population growth in this area, you are in a strong position to compete. Your proximity to Memphis and major transportation routes offers tremendous potential.

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This same message applies to people in every state across our nation. If we are to build our states, our country, we must do it by creating jobs and building industry.

We must do it by investing in our people through workforce training.

Even though we are in a national recession, backing off on our investment in economic development and workforce training would sap our strengths and cut our competitive edge.

That simply can't happen if we are going to succeed.

It was once said that “success seems to be largely a matter of hanging on after others have let go.”

I tell you this – we aren't letting go. There are too many opportunities out there, and too many opportunities for us to create, to ever think about letting go.

Believing “I must do something” solves more problems than saying “something must be done.”

You won't hear us say, “something must be done.” We live in America's state of promise. It is a promise too long unkept. That has changed.

We're building our future today. We're building our leaders today. The work we do now is our gift to the next generation, and I want it to be the best gift possible.

Thank you.