







Nearly 100 existing industries located here provide more than 7,500 jobs.

The last time I was in Hattiesburg, Convergys, an

Announced that they will be locating in Hattiesburg and will create approximately 700 jobs and will make an investment of \$6 M to the community.

It is because of these successes that Hattiesburg has been asked to share its economic development strategies with other cities across our state, and it is why J. C. Burns, the new director of DECD chose Hattiesburg as one of the cities to visit on his tour of the state.

I also had the opportunity to attend the Hattiesburg meeting. There was a great turnout of people from private business, education, government, neighboring cities and the community at large.

More than 1,300 people attended these meetings statewide to help us create a coherent agenda for advancing our state economically.

We know that it is time for us to move forward, to think bigger and put into place a plan that works for the people of Mississippi.

In an effort to do just that, I am pleased to say that we have established a coalition of Mississippi public and private sector leadership to develop the first ever Mississippi Partnership for Economic Development. This group is being co-chaired by myself and Dwight Evans, President and CEO of Mississippi Power. This is a dedicated group of Mississippi leaders will give their time and energy to create a new plan for economic growth in our State.

Mississippi has an economy that is strong and growing faster than it has in decades. We are seizing the opportunity to develop a strong plan that will map the direction that we want our state to take in the next decade.

We are also taking steps forward in the area of healthcare with the redevelopment of the Mississippi Children's Health Benefits Program.

- 4,000 MS children are now enrolled out of an approximate 85,000 eligible.
- Governor Tommy Thompson
- My administration is working to develop a new action plan and marketing strategy to ensure that all Mississippi children have health coverage.

## Census

- Education, economic development and healthcare issues are all affected by Mississippi's Census results.
- It is vital that we have an accurate count.
- Census workers will soon begin knocking on doors of the households that did not return their Census forms.
- If you are approached by a Census worker, please take a few minutes to answer their questions.
- It is vital to Mississippi's future.

## Closing Comments

I would like to be able to stand up here and tell you that we have all of the answers to Mississippi's challenges.

It will take more than just me, and more than just you, to make changes that are sensible and accountable for the people of Mississippi.

We need your help. We need you to work together with us to find solutions that make sense.

There are no quick fixes, but together we will find responsible approaches to making life better for all Mississippians.

Thank you.

