

*Remarks for the
10th Anniversary, Itawamba County Welcome Center
August 29, 2002*

(recognize Marilou Burns, Zack Stewart, Rosie Herron-Williams)

It's great to be here to celebrate 10 great years of service by this welcome center – 10 years of welcoming hundreds of thousands of people to our great state and showing them first-hand the true experience of southern hospitality.

Mississippi has so much to offer to people – from the beautiful beaches of the Gulf Coast to, of course, the many attractions found in northeast Mississippi. There's so much in this area alone to bring visitors to our state – from the history of Shiloh to the hysteria around Elvis.

Tourism is a major industry for Mississippi. Jobs are created through tourism – more than 94,000 in the state – and there is always a need for people to work in hotels, to maintain historic sites, to operate restaurants and gift shops, and of course, to welcome people to our state.

We're talking about a \$6 billion industry in Mississippi alone.

Back in May, we unveiled a new tourism slogan for the state – “Mississippi... Feels Like Coming Home.”

This slogan is being used as a cornerstone in our efforts to promote Mississippi as a destination spot for tourists, and I believe the simple message found in it rings true with everyone who crosses our borders.

It doesn't matter if you come into Mississippi by air; it doesn't matter if you drive in on I-55; it doesn't matter if you come in on Highway 78 in Itawamba County – it always feels like coming home.

I believe the main reason this slogan works is because of the hard work of people such as those working here in Itawamba County. Day in and day out, they are here to greet people and provide information.

And, I believe there's never been a stranger stop by this welcome center – just friends who haven't been made yet.

That's why Mississippi feels like coming home. That's why this welcome center has served so many people so well.

Thank you for the great work you do here in this corner of our state, and for keeping the spirit of Mississippi's hospitality and history alive for the past ten years.