

*Remarks to the  
Annual Emergency Management Workshop  
June 4, 2001*

Thank you, Robert. I'm pleased to have the chance to be here with you today.

This is a good opportunity for me to say a collective "thank you" to all of you for the work you do. It seems that every time we're together, we're a little more in "crisis" mode than we are here today. I'm glad to be with you under calmer conditions.

The work you do is among the most important done in our state. You are charged with the responsibility of preparing for, and responding to, disasters in our state.

And, there is a lot to deal with. Mississippi is in the natural line of fire for hurricanes and tornadoes. In fact, this past Friday marked the beginning of hurricane season.

At least six hurricanes are already predicted for this season, so we'll be getting ready.

We've had our share of flooding over the years. You've had to deal with emergencies from fires to hazardous material spills.

And you've done it well.

You show the people of Mississippi, and the people of the nation as well, how emergency situations should be handled. You provide an image of excellence – and the manner in which we are viewed by our neighbors and those beyond our borders is so important.

The way in which Mississippi is perceived affects us in all aspects – economic development, education, health care. We are creating a positive image.

For example, we have shown we are a strong player in economic development.

With the announcement of the Nissan plant, one of the top 1 percent economic development projects in the nation last year, we have placed ourselves in the spotlight.

With this plant, 4,000 new jobs will be created. Over 26,000 spin-off jobs will be created through the supporting businesses. They will be locating all over Mississippi, not just in Canton.

We have to keep this momentum up. We are glad Nissan is coming here, but we want more. We want more jobs, more economic development, more opportunities.

Everyone plays a role in our state's success.  
We all have to work together to succeed,  
make changes and create progress.

We've done a lot in the past year. AND,  
we're not slowing down.

We're working to expand opportunities in  
rural areas of Mississippi. I believe that  
development follows infrastructure – that if  
we put the proper foundations into place, we  
can continue to attract strong investments in  
Mississippi and her people.

One example of what we're doing to improve all areas of the state is the placement of local emergency management officials to assist communities in preparation for disasters.

Since January 2000, eleven new counties have been added to the local and county emergency office program. Fifty-three counties in Mississippi now have this program, and nearly \$1 million in federal funds will help them do their job.

With this commitment to safety and preparation for any emergency, business sees a safer place to do business. Knowing the proper emergency measures are in place, the chances of investing in a community are improved.

In fact, according to the “Economic State of the State” survey released last week by the Mississippi Economic Council, 88% of Mississippi business leaders feel that investing in infrastructure is a top priority in making our state competitive.

We will continue to do everything possible to continue the tremendous advances made in emergency management over the past year and a half.

However, we will need to do with leaner resources. As many of you may have heard, our revenue collections for the month of May were \$41 million below estimates.

I have asked state agencies to limit their spending for the first half of the fiscal year beginning July 1 to 45% of their budget. It is my sincere hope that by taking this action now, we can reduce the overall impact of this economic situation on your ability to provide services.

I know you will continue to work hard to protect the people of Mississippi, and I appreciate your help. Things will turn around, and when they do, we will be noticed for the work we are doing to make Mississippi a safer, healthier, happier place to live and work.

I am excited about what's happening in Mississippi. I feel good about the direction we're taking, and so should you.

Nobody ever said the work we're doing would be easy.

We knew going in there would be challenges. But, we've met those challenges head-on.

We've been proactive instead of reactive, and we're seeing the results.

I am proud of what we have done, and what we will do, together. I look forward to building on our partnership and shaping a brighter future for the people of Mississippi.

Thank you.

