

*Remarks for the
14th Annual "Teens on the Move" Conference
April 2, 2002*

Thank you, Commissioner Huggins, and let me say how great it is to be in one place and see the young people who are going to be leading Mississippi as we move through the 21st century!

I know each of you here today is committed to making the most of your potential, and that's just what our state needs. Each of you has a special talent and a special gift to share with Mississippi, and that's why I'm so glad to see you all here.

You understand the tremendous importance of making the right decisions, and there are going to be some tough ones for you to make – not just as teenagers, but as adults as well.

The decision not to drink; the decision not to smoke; the decision to make the right choices in life will help you reach the promise in each of you.

Mississippi needs you, and that's why we're working hard for you – to provide the best education possible, to attract the best jobs, to assure the best health care, to make sure you are safe.

Because of the work we're doing today, and the potential you hold for the future, others are looking at us and saying “why not Mississippi?” That speaks well of what we're doing.

We're raising teacher pay from 49th to 19th in the nation. We're in the process of putting an Internet-accessible computer in every public school classroom in the state.

In the past two years, we've attracted more than 21,000 new jobs and over \$6 billion in new investments.

States like New York are looking at what we're doing and saying, "why can't we be more like Mississippi?" A newspaper column in Louisiana referred to us as the "new North Carolina" of the South.

Those are strong statements that let us – and the rest of the world – know that exciting things are happening here. But, there is so much more we can and will accomplish, and you can be a part of making it happen.

We need you to help Mississippi reach her true potential. Use your skill, talent, energy and drive to make a difference in your community.

The great American poet e.e. cummings once wrote, “it takes courage to grow up and become who you really are.” That’s what we hope for from each of you – have courage, and become who you really are.

Stay strong in your convictions, hold fast to your dreams, and work hard. That’s how great things happen.

God bless you and good luck!