

Question 1

Please explain the major provisions of the Advantage Mississippi Initiative. What are the rationales behind them, and why were they passed?

Answer: Name Change – tells the business community that this is the lead development agency.

ACE Fund – a closing fund to be used to recruit an industry that shows an extraordinary economic development opportunity.

Regional Economic Development Act – enables local governmental units to form an alliance and share revenues from a project.

Mississippi Advantage Jobs Act – authorizes quarterly incentives to qualifying businesses based on annual salaries, health benefits and the creation of full time jobs.

Growth & Prosperity Act – allows approved businesses in a qualifying county to be tax exempt for a period of 10 years, excluding school taxes. The county's unemployment rate is the key factor in determining eligibility.

Jobs Tax Credit Amendments – tax credits for new full time employees or for companies transferring national or regional headquarters to MS.

Basic Skills Training Tax Credit – allows 50% tax credit to any employer providing certain basic skills training.

Question 2

Can you share some recent success stories of significant high-tech, high-wage employers who have announced major expansions in Mississippi?

Answer: Service Zone is locating a customer center in Starkville that will ultimately employ up to 600 people. All positions will require a high degree of computer knowledge and proficiency.

Howard Industries is building computers in Laurel.

Convergys Corp. is opening a new 700-employee call center in Hattiesburg.

Hartford Technologies is opening a new zinc oxide processing facility in Batesville.

Viking Range in Greenwood uses highly sophisticated manufacturing processes throughout its manufacturing facilities and is in a continuous growth mode.

Question 3

Given that MS is a well-know hub for the global telecommunications business, how is your state leveraging this advantage to recruit even more like-minded industry?

Answer: We will use a cluster approach to target industries that fit best for MS's future. This strategy allows us to capitalize on knowledge driven innovations and research and development capabilities. Along with that, we will work to help existing business and industry reposition to become more productive and competitive in order to leapfrog into the new economy. We have to pick the industries we want and target particular clusters in which to foster growth, entrepreneurship and technological capacity.

Question 4

What role will the state's colleges and universities play in your new economic development program?

Answer: Education is a key component of this plan and a major goal of this administration. Our universities and their research capabilities will be central to our success. MS will take advantage of the economic development opportunities presented by our well-regarded research-based institutions of higher learning. Our state's comprehensive system of higher education can be enhanced to help further build upon our state's technological and intellectual capacity. This will be central to MS's ability to keep our best and brightest here in our state – pursuing careers, opportunity and innovations. We will bring to life the technological and scientific advances being conceived and created at our universities (biosciences, engineering, supercomputing, polymers.)

Question 5

High-tech firms generally prefer to cluster around like industries.

What is your state doing to provide such opportunities?

Answer: We have passed legislation that will regard companies transferring its national or regional headquarters to the state. And, companies can receive \$1000 credit per job for new research and development jobs. Other measures include allowing retraining as an expense and other items that are important to high-tech industries.

Question 6

How would a large corporate real estate user benefit – both tangibly and intangibly – from Advantage MS Initiatives?

Answer: Any existing industry or new industry will benefit from this initiative. The MS Advantage Jobs act allows companies to receive up to 4% cash back on payroll if they provide an annual salary, jobs tax credits, basic skills training tax credits, and if they locate in certain areas, they would virtually in tax-free zones. Companies benefit intangibly by having located in these communities where they will be paying higher wages and therefore, improving the overall quality of life for the people of the community. The Advantage Mississippi Initiative helps ensure the Mississippi will be know as “America’s State of Promise.”

Question 7

What is the most significant corporate real estate project taking place right now in MS?

Answer: The new Lockheed Martin Advanced Propulsion, Thermal and Metrology facility at Stennis Space Center in Hancock County. The site was selected because of

its secure, remote location on a federally owned facility with buffer areas and limited access.

The project was implemented through a consortium consisting of the US Government-NASA (the landowner), the State of MS (will build the building and lease it back to the company), Hancock County (tax incentives and financial contributions), and a major division in Lockheed Martin (the equipment and technological processes owner).

Question 8

What are the principal economic development challenges being faced by your state right now? Is it labor, education, availability of water resources, transportation infrastructure or some other issue? What steps are being taken by government and industry leaders to address these challenges?

Answer: We are making sure that the people of Mississippi have strong schools, more higher-paying jobs, quality health care options and safe communities and homes. We have taken a progressive approach to budgeting that includes more accountability. For the first time, we presented our budget to the Committee at the beginning of the budget process. We have given the Committee a complete budget that is accountable and meets the needs of the people. We have shared with them our priorities for funding, and we have given them a plan of action to implement the budget.