

Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice. It is a great day to be a Mississippian.

Lieutenant Governor Hosemann, Speaker White, President Pro Tem Kirby, Speaker Pro Tem Barton, members of the Mississippi Legislature, friends, family, and my fellow Mississippians joining us in person and those watching from home, it is my pleasure to stand before you here today.

It is the single highest honor of my professional life to serve as the governor of the great state of Mississippi. And it brings me tremendous joy to stand before great leaders, the people of Mississippi, and God to take this oath today.

Before I go any further, I'd like to take a moment to thank the most important Mississippian to me and my family, my wife and our First Lady, Elee Reeves.

There are no words that can properly summarize how much you mean to me. From the day we met, less than one mile from this Capitol, everything has been different, and better. You are a wonderful wife, an amazing mom, and a terrific ambassador for our state. Thank you for being right by my side over this wild ride together.

I also want to thank our daughters, Tyler, Emma, and Maddie. I know that each of you make sacrifices as well – and you have made them as long as you can remember. Your mom and I are incredibly blessed by you – and I am so excited to see the strong, confident young women you are becoming.

I want to thank my dad, my mom, my brother Todd, my Mamaw, and the rest of my family. None of you signed up for, nor do you deserve, the lies and false attacks hurled at you simply because you are related, but please know that I love you all and I'm grateful for each of you. The reason I find myself here today is rooted in the values and love that come from you.

Many years ago, just after college, Elee and I decided to plant our roots in our home state, and to do everything in our power to make it better. It was a conscious decision. We had other options. We could have gone other places and done other things. But the pull of Mississippi was too strong. We were all in from the start. We volunteered. We worked hard. Bought a house in the city of Jackson. We did not at that time imagine statewide office, but we were determined to make a difference.

Then, in 2003, in what was a surprise to a lot of people, the voters of our state took a chance on a conservative young investment banker, and made me the first Republican treasurer in the history of our state.

My gratitude to the people of Mississippi for placing their trust in me, that day and every day since, can never fully be expressed in words. I thank God each and every day that he has provided the opportunity to serve.

And I'd like you each to know, from the bottom of my heart, how deeply thankful I am for your support.

I've met a few Mississippians who have voted for me every single time since 2003. And not all of them are related to me.

And I'm fully aware there are people who have never voted for me, not once in twenty years – but pray for me to succeed never the less.

And whether you voted for me or not, this time or ever, I want you to know it matters not. As I did four years ago, I want to once again make this promise to all of you – that I will be a governor for ALL Mississippi.

The longer I have served, the more I have come to appreciate that the defining characteristic about Mississippi is that sense that we are all in it together.

It is not our food, our football, or even our music that makes us unique. It is our commitment to each other.

I don't think anybody could have anticipated what we would face together as a state over the last four years. Tornadoes. Floods. Hurricanes. And a pandemic on top of it all. Yet, through every challenge encountered, we have emerged stronger.

Through every moment of despair, Mississippians showed the strength of our character and chose to be a light amidst the darkness.

That is a testament to the goodness of our people. And it makes me all the prouder to be a Mississippian.

I'll tell you this, I have frequently turned to God in prayer over these last four years. As a matter of fact, I have prayed a lot more as governor than I thought I would when I was sworn in the first time. And I know that I will do so again over the next four years.

That's why I'm especially thankful that we were once again able to start this inaugural ceremony with a prayer service Sunday. Mississippians are never bashful about our reliance on the Lord. We know that our faith is responsible for the ties that bind. And I am proud we come together so consistently to lift up our voices in unified prayer to an almighty God.

I promise all of you that I will continue seeking God's guidance through every challenge that we face – and I ask that you ask God to guide me when you pray as well.

Four years ago, I stood before you and discussed what we aimed to accomplish over this first term.

Four years ago, I stood here and called for a history-making increase in workforce training.

Then, together, we created the Office of Workforce Development, Accelerate Mississippi – and invested millions to equip our people with the skills they need for good jobs.

Just last week, Site Selection Magazine said our workforce efforts passed Texas and Louisiana in 2023, and we ain't done yet.

Four years ago, I called for a pay raise for our teachers.

Together, we secured the largest pay raise in state history.

Four years ago, I said we would travel the world to bring more great companies to Mississippi.

Together, we secured record breaking economic investment, which included the single largest economic deal in state history.

And you ain't seen nothing yet! We've got some big things coming. Projects that will fundamentally change lives and transform our state for the better.

On top of this, we delivered the single largest tax cut in our state's history and returned over half a billion dollars to Mississippians. We made historic investments in our state's infrastructure. We've achieved the Mississippi miracle in education, with more kids graduating than ever before. We went from 49th to 21st in fourth grade reading, from dead last to 23rd in fourth grade math, and we were among the top 5 in the entire nation when it came to fourth grade reading test scores for African American students. We are making sure ALL of Mississippi has momentum.

We bolstered our state's hospitals, expanded conservation efforts, increased training opportunities for medical professionals, committed more resources to public safety, and so much more.

And today, I am proud to tell you, we're just getting started.

So what comes next for Mississippi?

There is no doubt that our bad numbers are getting better, and our good numbers are becoming great.

I love to talk about rankings and results. I'm a numbers guy. But we are not pursuing test scores to beat Alabama. We are not pursuing capital investment to have bragging rights over Arkansas.

We are pursuing excellence – to secure permanence.

For too many decades, Mississippi's most valuable export has not been our cotton, or even our culture. It's been our kids.

Mississippi minds dominate some of the top positions in government, business, and entertainment across the country. They carry with them the pride and grit that is engrained in every Mississippian. They made other places better – and we missed out on all they could have done here at home.

My goal is not just to ensure that Mississippi is a source of pride, but that it can be the place where they achieve their fortune and dominance in their field.

By now you know I love to say that Mississippi has momentum. And we do. But today I want to tell you what I believe we must DO with that momentum.

Our goal must be what I call Mississippi Forever.

I want to build a state where my daughters, and all of our sons and daughters can proudly stay and raise their families.

I want every kid, from the Delta to the Coast, from Tishomingo to Tallahatchie, to grow up with the idea that they'll be Mississippi Forever.

I want every child to have the opportunities for an education, and a career, that enable them to be Mississippi Forever.

I want companies that are born here, to know they can grow here – Mississippi Forever.

And I want people who live in other states, many of whom grew up here, who are frustrated by the breakdown of culture and society where they live, who feel like they cannot get ahead, I want those families to look across the dinner table at each other and say: "honey, we need to go to Mississippi forever."

We do not need to aim to merely get better. We need to make it our priority to be the best, at everything that matters.

To accomplish this, we must be realistic about the challenges that we still face.

We need to honestly assess the barriers in our economy – and boldly knock them down.

We need to recognize that the cost of healthcare continues to rise, and access seems too limited.

We need to make sure we do not rest on our success in education and workforce training. Momentum is our asset and inertia is our enemy. We cannot settle for better – we have to demand the best.

Here in this building, we need to be adjusting our sights.

We need to be bold in our goals and carry our Mississippi pride into our actions. We can compete with anyone and win. We can achieve the things that our neighbors have achieved.

When our sons and daughters say: “I am from Mississippi,” we can give them the pride to deliver that statement with a straight back and a strong voice.

Let’s continue to give Mississippians relief from taxes and eliminate the burdens on their families. Let’s be transformational in those efforts to compete with the best.

Let’s continue to invest in and bolster Mississippi’s nationally recognized education system.

Let’s protect mothers and babies by further expanding the Pro-Life Agenda – by making Mississippi the best place in America to have and raise a child.

Let’s protect the rights of parents and let’s protect our kids.

Let’s proudly defend our culture and our way of life.

Let’s make Mississippi the safest state in the entire nation.

And let’s relentlessly recruit new jobs not just to our prosperous counties but to all our communities.

The fact is that everything we do, we do together. There is no black Mississippi or white Mississippi. There is no red Mississippi or blue Mississippi. There is only one Mississippi – and it is Mississippi Forever.

We know that in our hearts, none of us ever leave Mississippi. Our task is to make sure our opportunities align with our sentiment.

I really do believe that this is Mississippi’s time. We have an opportunity ahead of us that we must seize. But it will require that we be bold and ambitious.

We must be bold in our reforms. We must be bold in winning new jobs and businesses. We must be bold in our commitment to principles. And we must be bold to build a brighter future for the state we all love.

I’d like to end this speech where I started. Back twenty years ago when I first took this oath. As I have prepared for this day these last few weeks, it has been apparent to me that this is my last opportunity to do the thing I have most wanted to do my entire adult life.

And I know that I am not alone. I am surrounded by people in this Capitol, in both parties, who have chosen a path to make Mississippi better. And as I campaigned this year, I was struck by the fact that virtually everyone was driven by a desire to bring Mississippi up.

We have all been placed in a position of great importance. We sit at a crossroads for our state.

We've been entrusted by our friends, peers, and neighbors to make decisions that will impact many lives, not just today, but for many years to come.

Let us take up this work with joy and determination. Let us come together and heal our differences. Let us all throw ourselves at the great mission. Let us be united by our mission to make Mississippi the home for all its sons and daughters – forever.

Thank you all for being here today. Thank you to all of our legislators for giving your time and energy to serve our state. Thank you all for your support. And thank you all for your prayers.

May God bless you. May God bless your families. And may God bless the great state of Mississippi!