

August 10, 2001

Rachel Gamblin
340 Arbor Drive, #283
Ridgeland, Mississippi 39157

Dear Rachel:

Since signing HB 1134 on May 1, 2000, I have consistently called for the removal of the five percent trigger for teacher salary increases. My staff and I worked hard earlier this year to persuade legislators to remove this trigger before adjourning the 2001 Regular Legislative Session. As you know, we were unable to effect this change during that session.

Fortunately, responding to a request made by the legislative leadership, on July 23, 2001, I was able to offer legislators an opportunity to take action on this issue during an Extraordinary Session. There is no single issue more important to the advancement of our people and improvement of our quality of life. The action taken during this historical Extraordinary Session will bring Mississippi's average teacher salary up from 49th to 19th in the nation.

Teacher pay is indeed a priority for our state. Raising the average salary of Mississippi teachers to that of the southeastern average is critical to our school districts' ability to recruit and retain the qualified teachers that are critical to our children's educational development. Our children deserve no less. The recent removal of the five percent provision proves to our teachers, our children and Mississippians that education is a top priority and that we are committed to paying our teachers a competitive salary.

Thank you for taking the time to write me regarding this very important issue. I appreciate your input on this and any other matter over which you are concerned. If I can be of any assistance in the future, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,

RONNIE MUSGROVE

RM/mjb