

RE: PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING
INITIATIVE MEASURE 42
INITIATIVE MEASURE 42A

TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Link Centre
1800 west Main Street
Tupelo, Mississippi 38801
On Monday, August 17, 2015
at 5:30 p.m.

*REPORTED BY: SHARRON F. ALLEN, CSR, RPR
CSR NO. 1144*

1 *MR. HOSEMANN:* I'm Delbert Hosemann,
2 Secretary of State of the state of
3 Mississippi. And under the terms of the
4 Mississippi Code, the Secretary of State is
5 to have five individual hearings around the
6 state of Mississippi on any constitutional
7 initiative. And I so appreciate y'all
8 coming tonight. This is a wonderful example
9 of some of the public commentary and
10 democracy that we live in.

11 We're going to start with the Pledge of
12 Allegiance. If you would all please rise.

13 (PLEDGE)

14 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you.

15 What you're participating in this
16 evening is a historical event in the city.
17 Prior to this time -- we're going to be
18 discussing Amendment 42 to the Mississippi
19 Constitution. Prior to this time we have had
20 only four have reached the ballot before; and
21 that was term limits, which was defeated;
22 personhood, which was defeated; voter ID,
23 which was passed; and imminent domain, which
24 also was passed. So what we're doing tonight
25 is historical, and it's a wonderful

1 participation.

2 The four that you've previously had on
3 the amendment were unusual. And for the first
4 time in the history of Mississippi, which is
5 since 1817, we have competing amendments
6 tonight. So you'll hear from both sides.

7 The citizenry of Mississippi gathered
8 the necessary 107,000 signatures plus and
9 allowed this to go to the attorney general.
10 The attorney general wrote the ballot title
11 that you will see on the actual ballot itself,
12 and then the Mississippi Legislature then met
13 and proposed a competing amendment, which is
14 referred to by law as 42A. So you have two.
15 You have 42 proposed by the citizenry and 42A.
16 They'll be discussing those -- I think we've
17 got them up here. They'll be discussing those
18 as we go forward.

19 There are brochures here of the
20 constitutional initiative and also the small
21 one, which is this publication issued from the
22 legislation. And we have the actual documents
23 itself.

24 In 42A, the reason that we've been
25 slower getting out the ballot is there was

1 litigation in whether or not the attorney
2 general or a chancery judge in Hinds County,
3 Mississippi, would write the ballot title.
4 That morphed its way through the court system
5 to the Mississippi Supreme Court, and last
6 Friday they ruled that the attorney general,
7 Jim Hood's, ballot title would go on the
8 ballot and not the judge's amended version.
9 So we now have our ballot titles, and we also
10 have both actual amendments. And I welcome
11 y'all to read those -- they're in here -- and
12 the constitutional initiative process in here.

13 So for the first time ever, Mississippi
14 will face competing ballot amendments coming
15 up in November.

16 As part of our hearings I think it's
17 important -- and we also have a great crowd
18 tonight. Thank you. We also transcribe each
19 and every one of these, and they will be on
20 our website for you to review and see what
21 your fellow citizens said in Jackson,
22 Hernando, Brookhaven, Hattiesburg, the
23 Mississippi Gulf Coast, Meridian. We're
24 holding eight of these around the state of
25 Mississippi. So I would caution you don't say

1 anything you don't want in print. I try not
2 to. I know we've got a couple of mayors here,
3 and they know how to do that. Y'all be
4 careful, because it will all go on the
5 website. So we appreciate y'all coming
6 tonight.

7 We start with the proponents for the two
8 initiatives. Then they will rise and then
9 give the opposition to the two amendments.
10 Then I will ask for public commentary. And I
11 would ask you, if you haven't signed up, Lea
12 Anne has got her sign-up sheet here.

13 The way we do this, although there
14 wasn't a roadmap for this, but the way we
15 decided to do this is to allow the two to be
16 for and against on each one of the amendments,
17 and then the public gets to speak. So each of
18 you will be given two to three minutes to
19 stand up and say why you're for or against it.
20 And those are some of the great commentary
21 that we have in Mississippi. So I would
22 encourage you, if you want to speak, please do
23 so. If you haven't signed up, see Lea Anne
24 down here in the front, and she'll give you a
25 number, and we'll take those in order as they

1 came up.

2 we're pleased to have Jeremy Martin with
3 us. One of the first things we did when we
4 became Secretary of State was to start an
5 office in Tupelo. It's such a great economic
6 and educational part of our Mississippi State
7 that they deserved a Secretary of State's
8 office. And it has been very busy, and Jeremy
9 does a great job, and all the staff here do a
10 great job. Jeremy is in the back. If you
11 have a minute, please meet him. He is your
12 representative Secretary of State, and
13 everything we do in the Capitol can be done
14 right here just down the street from here.

15 All right. We will begin with each
16 speaker here to get started, and so we will
17 start with Merrill. Ms. Nordstrom rises in
18 favor of 42, and she will begin the
19 discussion.

20 *MS. NORDSTROM:* Good evening. My name
21 is Merrill Nordstrom, and I was born and
22 raised in Oxford. I am a product of
23 Mississippi Public Schools. My mother, who
24 came here tonight -- so, Mom, raise your
25 hand. -- my mother taught English for 14

1 years in Mississippi Public Schools. My
2 husband teaches at Ole Miss, and we are the
3 parents of three Oxford Public School
4 children. Unfortunately, they couldn't be
5 here tonight because soccer outweighs this.
6 So, needless to say, my husband and I are
7 very vested in the future and the success of
8 Mississippi's public schools.

9 I am honored to stand here as one of the
10 nearly 200,000 Mississippians who signed the
11 Better Schools, Better Jobs petition last
12 year. These are Mississippians who are
13 committed to public education and to providing
14 your children a better future. These
15 Mississippians are from every county and from
16 both political parties. These are mothers,
17 fathers, teachers, business leaders. These
18 are Mississippians who understand that
19 shortchanging our schools damages our state's
20 economy and our future.

21 So what is MAEP? MAEP stands for the
22 Mississippi Adequate Education Program. It is
23 a law passed in 1997 by the State Legislature.
24 The purpose of MAEP is to ensure that our
25 schools are adequately funded so that all

1 children will get a decent education.

2 Since 1997 lawmakers have broken their
3 own law and severely underfunded every single
4 school in Mississippi. Because of their
5 broken promises, our schools face problems
6 like unsafe buildings, lack of up-to-date
7 computers, technology, lab equipment, lack of
8 textbooks, large class sizes, and unsafe
9 buses.

10 In one school district facilities are in
11 such need of repair that teachers have to put
12 down wooden pallets in the hallways so
13 children can get to class when it rains. In
14 another county, the superintendent pays money
15 out of his own pocket to supplement teacher
16 salaries.

17 And here in Lee County, schools have
18 been shortchanged \$57 million by state
19 lawmakers since 2008. That's enough money for
20 165 new teachers for ten years. Let me repeat
21 that. Enough money for 165 new teachers for
22 ten years.

23 The results are clear. Local school
24 districts have been shortchange. Local
25 property taxes have gone up. Too many schools

1 have too few teachers, outdated textbooks,
2 antiquated facilities, unsafe buses, and a
3 lack of computers.

4 The underfunding of schools hurts our
5 state's ability to attract companies to move
6 here. Our students are not learning the
7 skills companies are looking for. And the
8 results hurt our ability to grow and attract
9 good-paying jobs.

10 You know, I've heard certain lawmakers
11 and critics of 42 refer to our public schools
12 as abysmal failures. Apparently these
13 lawmakers did not learn in school the concept
14 of cause and effect.

15 It is stories like these in schools all
16 across that harm our kids, that sell them
17 short, that scare companies and businesses
18 away from doing business in Mississippi, that
19 costs us jobs. It is our moral obligation,
20 and it is incumbent upon us as Mississippians
21 to demand that our elected officials do better
22 for our children.

23 we can do better. we can have better
24 schools, better jobs, and a better future for
25 our children and our state.

1 So what is Initiative 42? Initiative 42
2 is a constitutional amendment that will
3 require lawmakers to adequately fund
4 Mississippi's public schools as they promised
5 back in 1997.

6 Lawmakers will tell you it means that
7 one judge in Hinds County or one judge in
8 Forrest County or one judge in some county
9 will decide how much money our schools will
10 get. That is simply not true. All a judge
11 will do is ensure that lawmakers are spending
12 the money on education as required under the
13 law, the very law that they themselves
14 enacted.

15 Lawmakers will tell you that this is
16 simply a tax or will tell you that, if 42
17 passes, it will require the state to cut
18 budgets in other departments. This is not
19 true either. The Better Schools, Better Jobs
20 petition that nearly 200,000 Mississippians
21 signed provided a roadmap for fully funding
22 Mississippi's public schools without cuts or
23 tax increases. In fact, the petition clearly
24 states a quarter of the way down the back page
25 the following: "Funding the initiative will

1 not require a reduction in, elimination of, or
2 reallocation of funding from any currently
3 funded programs."

4 The plan specifically outlined on each
5 petition calls for a gradual phase-in over
6 seven years, using natural growth in state
7 revenue. The general fund revenue has
8 increased annually an average of 4.8 percent
9 over the last ten years. Just a quarter of
10 the predicted future growth amounts to
11 \$37.5 million. And at that rate it will take
12 only seven years to fully fund MAEP.

13 Thomas Jefferson, America's third
14 president and one of our country's founding
15 fathers, said, "In a free society, public
16 education, without a commitment to excellence,
17 merely serves the interests of those who hold
18 dominion over the common many. Only by
19 committing to the provision of the absolute
20 best education possible for our children will
21 we be assured that their future will truly be
22 theirs."

23 We are at a crucial moment. We must
24 reclaim the promise of public education. In
25 November you can decide whether to increase

1 funding for our schools or allow state
2 lawmakers to continue to underfund our
3 schools.

4 42 is an investment in the future of our
5 children. 42 is an investment in our state.
6 42 means better schools, better jobs, higher
7 wages, and more economic growth. I urge you
8 to study the facts. Visit the 42 website at
9 42forbetterschools.org. When you go there you
10 can see exactly how much your local schools
11 are underfunded. Look it up. Then take out
12 your property tax bill and look at that. They
13 are related to each other. We can fix that
14 imbalance through 42.

15 Talk to your friends, neighbors.
16 Democrats, Republicans -- it doesn't matter
17 which party they are in. Everyone in
18 Mississippi understands our schools have been
19 shortchanged, our kids have been shortchanged,
20 and our economy has been shortchanged. 42 is
21 our chance to really make a difference.

22 Thank you.

23 *MR. HOSEMANN:* A standing ovation.

24 Enjoy that, Ms. Nordstrom. You don't get
25 those very often. I'm still waiting on one

1 myself.

2 Russell Latino will speak for 42A, and
3 then we'll go back and forth.

4 *MR. LATINO:* Well, it's good to see
5 such a balanced crowd tonight. I'm teasing.
6 I stood in the back of the sanctuary earlier
7 tonight and watched everybody flow in. And
8 I admire people, even people that I disagree
9 with, who have the passion to come out to
10 something like this and let their voice be
11 heard. I was telling Merrill before we
12 started tonight that I believe you can
13 disagree without being disagreeable. And I
14 think that's what makes our democracy or our
15 republic so much better than some of the
16 systems of government around the country or
17 around the world.

18 My name is Russell Latino. For the last
19 ten years I've practiced law. Being on the
20 stage tonight, I think sometimes maybe that
21 was the better profession. But now I've
22 ventured into the world of public advocacy.
23 About a month ago a group of friends and I got
24 together and formed a group called Kids First
25 Mississippi, which is a political issues

1 committee, with the goal of engaging on
2 education policy and thinking about education
3 policy in sort of outside the box more nuance
4 ways. And one of the things that we thought
5 was important was to engage on this issue, 42.

6 Now, I'll tell you this: That, like
7 Ms. Nordstrom, I come from a public school
8 background, a very blue collar family
9 background. I was born in a charity hospital
10 just north of Hammond, Louisiana. Moved to
11 the Mississippi Gulf Coast when I was a baby.
12 My dad is a residential painter; my mom's
13 worked at Walmart since I was six years old.
14 Grew up in public schools from kindergarten
15 through graduation.

16 I understand the value of a good public
17 education because it was that education that I
18 had that gave me the foundation and the
19 opportunity to be the second person in my
20 whole extended family to ever attend college.

21 when I was at college at Tulane, I
22 tutored kids at C.J. Peete and Magnolia
23 Projects, and I saw firsthand what it was like
24 to be in school systems that were failing. I
25 saw firsthand what it was like to have kids

1 who came from communities that really didn't
2 value education.

3 After that I worked at a couple of
4 churches. This is an interesting setting. I
5 used to work as a youth minister at the time.
6 And working with kids from all walks of life
7 and seeing the differences between kids that
8 had parents that were really engaged and kids
9 that didn't have parents that were really
10 engaged, kids that went to the best schools
11 and kids that maybe didn't go to the best
12 schools.

13 There is a false choice in this debate,
14 and I want to address it on the front end.
15 You may disagree with me on whether or not 42
16 should become part of the Constitution, and
17 that's fine. That's part of what makes our
18 system cool. But there's a false choice that
19 says that if you don't support 42, then you
20 don't support public education. That's simply
21 not true. The handful of people that didn't
22 stand up for Ms. Nordstrom who are in here
23 thinking, "Oh, dear gosh, we're outnumbered
24 here," those people all recognize the vital
25 importance of public education to the future

1 of this state. Every single one of them.
2 There's not one of them sitting there going,
3 "Man, I really want our public schools to be
4 bad." Because we all recognize that the
5 product of public schools is the future of our
6 state. Right? So let's dispense with that.

7 Now, let's talk about where there's room
8 for improvement. Everyone in this room can
9 agree that educational outcome shouldn't be
10 dependent upon the ZIP code of the child, the
11 race of the child, the gender of the child,
12 how big their parents' bank accounts are. I
13 think every single person in this room would
14 agree with that.

15 Everyone in this room will agree -- and
16 just by a show of hands, how many of you are
17 educators? Okay. A lot of you. Probably
18 80 percent of the room. Right? Everyone can
19 agree that we've got some phenomenal teachers
20 and administrators in the state of
21 Mississippi. We do. We also, if we're being
22 honest with each other, can probably agree
23 there are some who maybe aren't phenomenal.

24 We can all agree that there are
25 instances of wasteful spending that goes on in

1 the state. And if we're honest with
2 ourselves, I think we can also agree there are
3 instances of wasteful spending within our
4 school districts as well.

5 Everyone can agree that whether it's
6 50th or 48th or whatever the number is based
7 on what publication you're looking at at that
8 given moment, that's not good enough.

9 I love Mississippi as much as everybody
10 else in this room. I love its people. I love
11 its culture. I was married here, and I have
12 chosen to work here. I've had my kids here.
13 I'm invested. But I don't want my two kids to
14 grow up in a state where we're the butt of
15 late night jokes any more than anybody else
16 does. The question is whether passing 42
17 actually moves us along.

18 There was an article today in the *Daily*
19 *Journal* by Bobby Harrison. And I didn't agree
20 with everything that was in it, but the part I
21 agreed with, he said, "Words matter."

22 So far this debate has been really
23 simple. So far it's just if you want more
24 funding, then vote for 42. And the reality is
25 it's not that simple. You see these

1 commercials on TV sometimes for drugs --
2 right? -- for pharmaceuticals. And those
3 commercials will tell you, "So you've got dry
4 mouth. Take such and such drug." And there's
5 a list of like 50 potential side effects.
6 Right? Your eyeballs are going to fall out.
7 Your arms are going to fall off. You're going
8 to have cardiac arrest. You're going to die.
9 You've heard all those. You know what I'm
10 talking about.

11 If you look at the actual language of
12 the amendment that's in front of you -- not
13 the way other people are summarizing it, not
14 even the way that I'm summarizing it -- if you
15 look at the actual language of the amendment
16 that we're voting on, it's like one of those
17 commercials. There are a lot of side effects.

18 And so it can't simply be 42 for public
19 schools or 42 for fully funding because that's
20 too simple. It's not truthful. You've got to
21 be willing to look at it and say, "At what
22 cost are we willing to go forward on 42?" And
23 I'm not just talking about dollars. I'm
24 talking about whether or not parents and
25 teachers and administrators lose their voice.

1 I'm talking about when you want more
2 accountability, does this actually give us
3 more accountability? I'm talking about
4 whether or not our legislature is going to
5 have the flexibility to innovate and to
6 address problems in the event that our economy
7 suddenly tanks.

8 All of those are legitimate questions.
9 All of those are questions that need to be
10 answered. And so I want to look -- do we have
11 it? We don't have it tonight. Maybe in your
12 pamphlets, if you have your pamphlet. -- and
13 talk about what this thing will actually do.
14 Talk about the words, because words matter.
15 Okay?

16 The current section 201 in our
17 Constitution, what does it say? It already
18 guarantees the right to a free public
19 education. It does. So the amendment is not
20 doing anything new there. It says that "The
21 legislature, by general law, shall provide for
22 the establishment, maintenance, and support of
23 a system of free public schools, subject to
24 conditions and limitations the legislature
25 shall prescribe."

1 That's what it says right now. So as it
2 sits right now, the Constitution affords the
3 legislature the right to dictate educational
4 policy. And what does that mean in practical
5 terms? In practical terms, from the
6 Mississippi Department of Education all the
7 way down to your local elementary school, all
8 of that falls under Section 201 of the
9 Constitution, the authority that was given the
10 legislature in the Constitution. Okay?

11 If you pass 42 and the amendment that
12 has been proposed under 42 becomes part of our
13 Constitution, there will no longer be any
14 reference at all to the legislature in our
15 Constitution in Section 201. It won't exist.
16 And maybe that's good. I know the voters of
17 Mississippi get to decide whether or not
18 cutting out the legislature from all education
19 decisions is really a good thing. I don't
20 think it is.

21 So your applause actually sets a good
22 contrast. It does. Because if that's the
23 position, we need to make clear that that's
24 what voters are deciding -- whether or not to
25 do away with the legislature in education.

1 Okay?

2 So it cuts out the legislature's ability
3 by general law, cuts out the legislature's
4 ability to impose conditions and limitations.
5 That phrase, "by general law," means an awful
6 lot in the Constitution. That phrase is how
7 the legislature gets its power to address
8 specific things in our Constitution. And it's
9 been completely omitted.

10 So when Ms. Nordstrom says that this is
11 really just about having a check where the
12 court will supervise and ensure the
13 legislature does the right thing, the
14 amendment itself doesn't say that. The
15 amendment itself says the legislature is no
16 longer part of the process. And maybe that's
17 fine for some. I think the average
18 Mississippian needs to know that.

19 Then it adds some interesting language
20 about "adequate and efficient." What is
21 adequate and efficient? It doesn't really
22 define that in the amendment itself. There is
23 no definition of what is adequate and
24 efficient. And then it adds an entirely new
25 power for the chancery courts to enforce or

1 determine what is adequate and efficient for
2 purposes of our schools. That's what it does.
3 And it's not just they're going to have
4 judicial review. It's that we're calling upon
5 the courts to take it upon themselves to become
6 policymakers, to determine what is adequate
7 and efficient. It is an unprecedented and
8 dangerous transfer of power from the
9 legislature to a court.

10 Now, you can sit up here and say unh-unh
11 as to whether or not a single judge will have
12 these decisions all you want, but a suit
13 against the state of Mississippi will be
14 brought in Jackson, Mississippi. And so a
15 single judge will have the power to determine
16 what is adequate and efficient. That's what
17 the amendment actually says. That's all it
18 says. It doesn't say MAEP. It doesn't say
19 anything about funding.

20 And so what the supporters would then
21 point to is what the initiative petition says.
22 So let's look at what Mr. Munford said the
23 amendment should do. I'll say this until I'm
24 blue in the face, and I think that -- I think
25 that what you saw in Justice Randolph -- and

1 then I'll stop, but give me 30 seconds.

2 I think what you saw that Justice
3 Randolph said is that the court looks at a
4 constitutional amendment and not all the other
5 stuff. The court is not bound to look at all
6 the other stuff. And that should scare you
7 when we're talking about giving one judge that
8 kind of discretion.

9 *MR. HOSEMANN:* I see Senator Hob Bryan
10 here.

11 Are there any other elected -- all the
12 elected officials, would y'all please stand.
13 All the elected officials. We have several
14 here tonight. Thank you.

15 We are pleased to have the members of
16 the Mississippi Highway Patrol tonight. They
17 do an honorable job. When you really need
18 them, they're just minutes away. They're
19 awesome.

20 So now we'll move to the contrary
21 positions. And, Ms. Nordstrom, do you want to
22 start against 42A? He did for. Are you doing
23 for or against?

24 *MS. NORDSTROM:* Against.

25 *MR. HOSEMANN:* So do you want to do

1 for?

2 *MR. LATINO:* Sure.

3 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Okay. Let's do that,
4 and then she'll speak against 42A.

5 *MR. LATINO:* As I was saying. This is
6 an interesting format because the essence of
7 it is that I'm against amending the
8 Constitution, and Ms. Nordstrom is for 42.
9 So there's a certain artifice about this
10 that -- I envy her position, though. When I
11 was practicing law, it would have been great
12 if I got to go first and last. That tends
13 to be an enviable position to be in.

14 Looking back briefly at the initiative
15 petition itself, the only reference to MAEP is
16 in the initiative petition. That's the only
17 reference. And it is used to try and define
18 the word "adequate" that's going to be in the
19 amendment. That's not on the screen. But it
20 says that it is a minimum standard. So what
21 does that mean? That means that this judge in
22 Jackson is going to have the ability to add
23 additional things to that in trying to
24 determine what is adequate. That could be a
25 lot of different things. That could be

1 anything. The unintended consequences are
2 virtually infinite.

3 And then the way it defines the word
4 "efficient" is basically that the judge will
5 be able to implement policy that makes us
6 competitive favorably with surrounding states.
7 Well, that sounds great. Nobody wants to not
8 be competitive favorably.

9 But, again, what does that mean? We're
10 giving all this discretion, all this authority
11 to a single judge in Jackson to determine what
12 is adequate and efficient. Even if you take
13 what the petition says as if a judge would
14 look at it and say, "This is the gospel truth.
15 I'm going to incorporate this as if it was a
16 part of the Constitution," even if you do
17 that, we still are giving the judge discretion
18 that goes far beyond funding and incorporates
19 a whole heck of a lot of other things --
20 curriculum, standards; let's see,
21 consolidation of school districts, support
22 from one school district to the next school
23 district. There are endless possibilities
24 that we are giving to this judge.

25 And I understand that there's

1 frustration with the legislature, but that's a
2 174-member body that are elected out of your
3 community, people that you can go have a cup
4 of coffee with, people that you can pick up
5 the telephone and call. You're not going to
6 be the one electing the judge in Jackson. You
7 won't have any say in how they determine what
8 is adequate and efficient.

9 If you're thinking that the only thing
10 this judge will do is implement MAEP, that's
11 simply not what the amendment says. And then
12 the question becomes "Are you willing to take
13 that gamble with your schools and how you
14 educate your children?" And I say that's a
15 dang big gamble.

16 Now, let's talk about 42A for a second.
17 No doubt Ms. Nordstrom is going to get up and
18 tell you that 42A was a dirty trick. That's
19 the line. It was a dirty trick. And she's
20 going to tell you it's the first time in 200
21 years it was ever done. We've only had the
22 ballot initiative process since 1992, as
23 Secretary Hosemann said, and there have only
24 been four on the ballot. So it's a little
25 dramatic to act as if this is some sort of a

1 horrible unprecedented thing.

2 The legislature is afforded the right in
3 the process to offer an alternative. And
4 here's why it was necessary in this instance:
5 Because our ballot initiative process is so
6 confusing -- and it is extremely confusing --
7 people looking at the amendment or looking at
8 the ballot title summary, they might not look
9 at it and say, "well, I wonder what we did
10 with the legislature." They might look at it
11 and say, "Fundamental right sounds good.
12 Adequate and efficient. Don't really know
13 what that means, but it sounds good. The
14 court's involved. Interesting."

15 But they might not look at it and say,
16 "well, did we cut out our legislature?" And
17 42A serves the purpose of creating a contrast,
18 of saying, "Do you want policy decisions made
19 by the people you elect in your communities,
20 or do you want policy decisions being made by
21 a judge?" And that's why it is entirely
22 appropriate.

23 I've sat in two of these now and
24 listened as person after person passionately
25 has gotten up and talked about not having

1 crayons or glue sticks or computers or pallets
2 being put down in the hallway. If those
3 things are really happened, those things
4 should be addressed. You won't get any
5 argument out of me on that. None of these
6 folks, though, address whether the amendment
7 that will become part of the Constitution
8 guarantees funding, and none of them address
9 whether it makes sense to give a judge that
10 kind of authority. They just ignored what the
11 amendment says. But words matter.

12 I can only assume this is either a sign
13 of complete and total frustration where you
14 get to the point that even a bad idea sounds
15 okay just because it's an idea, or it's
16 because there are people who legitimately want
17 to do away with representative government.
18 And that's why I think 42A matters.

19 I will say this: A lot of people have
20 railed against politicians too. And they're
21 an easy target. Right? They do crazy things
22 that make us scratch our head. But some of
23 that is demagoguery. It really is. When we
24 talk about Jackson politicians, what we're
25 really talking about again are people elected

1 from your communities. And you know what?
2 The judge in Jackson is a Jackson politician.

3 One of the phrases that I've heard over
4 and over again in these things, too, is "we've
5 got to put gas in the car if we want the car
6 to run." And I get that. It's a clever
7 little line. But the truth of the matter is
8 that the legislature has nearly quadrupled
9 spending on education since 1970. Adjusted
10 for inflation dollars, in 1970 we were
11 spending \$2,841. We're now spending close to
12 \$8500 per pupil. We've quadrupled spending.
13 The legislature has increased funding since
14 2012 \$300 million on K through 12 education.
15 This last year, 50-something percent of the
16 revenue growth went to K through 12 education.
17 This next year, 60-something percent;
18 66.3 percent will go to K through 12
19 education.

20 I'm not apologist for the legislature,
21 but I'll say this: That it is disingenuous to
22 act like they are slashing and burning
23 schools. And I'll say this too: If we're
24 ever going to get to the point that we can
25 actually improve education in the state of

1 Mississippi, it can't just be a dollar thing.
2 It can't just be a blame-the-politician thing.
3 It's got to be way more than that, because in
4 the last four years while we've quadrupled
5 spending, our test scores have remained
6 stagnant. And there are states like Utah that
7 spend \$2,000 less per student, and they're in
8 the top ten in NAEP scores. It's not just
9 about money. It's not just about blaming
10 politicians.

11 I've heard it said, too, that if you
12 don't break the law, you won't end up in front
13 of a court. First of all, the legislature did
14 not break the law, whether you like it or not.
15 The truth is this: One legislature cannot
16 bind another legislature when it comes to
17 appropriations.

18 The second thing I'd say is this:
19 Having practiced law for ten years and
20 represented a lot of clients that didn't do
21 anything wrong, people end up in front of
22 courts all the time, having not done anything
23 wrong because there are lawyers -- I'm
24 recovering -- who can make money off of them.
25 And there are lawyers looking at what we're

1 doing right now saying, "How can I make money
2 off of this if it passes?" One of our former
3 governors has done it.

4 You need to think about what the
5 amendment actually says, because words matter.
6 And vote no on both 42 and 42A.

7 Thank you.

8 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Ms. Nordstrom, speaking
9 against 42A.

10 *MS. NORDSTROM:* Before I begin, I want
11 to respond to a few issues that were brought
12 up.

13 First, this historic funding of public
14 education by our legislators down in Jackson,
15 they can throw out as many figures as they
16 want to, but I won't let them confuse you.
17 These are the facts: This year's K through 12
18 funding is 3.5 million less than it was in
19 2008. K through 12's share of the state
20 budget has been reduced in each of the last
21 three years. K through 12 funding is the
22 smallest percentage of the state budget in
23 Mississippi's history. The state budget,
24 excluding K through 12, has grown by more than
25 30 percent since 2008. K through 12 funding

1 has remained stagnant. And the worst part,
2 each year the state spends \$18,000,162 to
3 house one prison inmate, but only spends
4 \$5,140 to educate a child. Does that make
5 sense to you?

6 I would like for all parents and
7 grandparents of children who attend
8 Mississippi's public schools to please stand.
9 I want you to know that the reason you are
10 here and the reason Initiative 42 will be on
11 the ballot in November is for your children,
12 your grandchildren, and for generations to
13 come.

14 Ask yourself this question: Are you
15 satisfied with the schools your children and
16 your grandchildren attend? If the answer is
17 no, you need to vote for 42.

18 Secondly, about the language in the
19 Constitution: Mr. Latino is correct. The
20 seven-year phase-in plan is not in the
21 Constitution. But there is nowhere in the
22 Constitution that says we have to fund MAEP in
23 one year. We have given them an option; but
24 if the lawmakers have a better idea that
25 doesn't require raising taxes or cutting the

1 state budget, we are all for it.

2 Mr. Latino is also correct the word
3 "funding" or the title "MAEP" is not located
4 in the constitutional amendment. The reason
5 being is because the funding mechanism is
6 already state law under MAEP.

7 Mr. Latino also talked about how the
8 ballot initiative process is extremely
9 confusing. Well, I say adding 42A to the
10 ballot makes it a lot clearer. Right?

11 Mr. Latino also talks about that words
12 matter. Well, I say to you that actions
13 matter, and since 1997 we haven't seen any
14 action.

15 Ladies and gentlemen, do not be fooled
16 by the legislative alternative, a legislative
17 alternative that has not even been really
18 spoken about tonight. The person that has
19 come here to speak about the alternative just
20 told you to vote no to both. So if that
21 doesn't show you it's a trick, I don't know
22 what is.

23 Never before in the 198-year history of
24 Mississippi have lawmakers ever thwarted the
25 people's will by placing an alternative to an

1 initiative measure on the general election
2 ballot -- or since 1992, whatever number you
3 want to use. It's never been done before
4 until education was on the table. It did not
5 happen until after nearly 200,000
6 Mississippians signed a petition saying they
7 wanted a constitutional amendment to force
8 lawmakers to obey their own law and fully fund
9 our public schools.

10 42A was placed on the November ballot by
11 lawmakers for one purpose and one purpose
12 only -- to divide the supporters of public
13 education so that Initiative 42 would not get
14 the percentage of votes needed to amend our
15 State Constitution. In other words, it is a
16 trick, a sleight-of-hand deception. Do not
17 fall for it.

18 voters will have two choices when they
19 enter the voting booth on November 3rd. The
20 first choice is whether to amend the State
21 Constitution. The Constitution needs to be
22 amended because it gives lawmakers control
23 over public school funding with no
24 accountability. Voters who want this
25 accountability for full funding of our schools

1 must vote yes for this constitutional
2 amendment.

3 The second choice is between Initiative
4 42 and the legislative alternative, 42A.
5 Again, voters who want better schools should
6 vote for Initiative 42, not 42A. It's easy.
7 Just remember that 42A stands for 42 against,
8 as in against public education or against
9 changing anything.

10 The author of 42A did not put it on the
11 ballot in the hope that it would pass. He did
12 it to split the vote so that neither amendment
13 is adopted. By putting 42A on the ballot,
14 lawmakers simply thumbed their noses at the
15 Mississippians who signed petitions for 42.
16 Don't be fooled.

17 42A keeps the status quo. 42A allows
18 lawmakers to continue to underfund our
19 schools. 42A is against adequate education.
20 42A says yes to unsafe buses, yes to leaky
21 roofs, yes to less training for teachers. It
22 does nothing to improve our schools. Only
23 Initiative 42 will hold our lawmakers
24 accountable to fulfill their promise to make
25 education funding a priority.

1 Now, lawmakers will tell you some tall
2 tales. The politicians in Jackson will tell
3 you that throwing more money at public schools
4 will not solve our problems. But by not
5 following its own 1997 law, they've never
6 given their own plan a chance to succeed.

7 The politicians in Jackson will tell you
8 that one judge in Hinds County or Forrest
9 County or some other county will decide how
10 much money your school district can get. The
11 fact is that one judge in one county has never
12 had the final say on anything that one side or
13 the other didn't like. The nine-member State
14 Supreme Court has always had the final word;
15 as an example, what happened last week on 42.

16 The politicians in Jackson will tell you
17 that they'll have to cut state budgets or
18 raise your taxes to follow their own law.
19 This is simply not true. But go look at your
20 local tax bill and see how much it's gone up
21 in the past ten years, all because the same
22 politicians won't do their job and follow the
23 law.

24 The money is there for our schools
25 without a tax increase and without cutting

1 state budgets. Every single story these
2 politicians tell is based on fear, using scare
3 tactics that have no basis in fact. Ask
4 yourself why would these lawmakers work so
5 hard to confuse you about an issue as
6 important as public education? Maybe it's
7 because they're scared to death of losing
8 their control and their power in telling you
9 how your school should be run. Sometimes
10 these politicians get confused about who works
11 for whom.

12 On November 3rd you have the chance to
13 take back control of your schools by voting
14 for 42. You have the chance to tell lawmakers
15 that you won't be fooled by 42A. You have the
16 chance to hold these politicians accountable
17 for fully funding our public schools like they
18 promised. And you have the chance to show the
19 children of Mississippi that there is nothing
20 more important than education, because better
21 schools means better jobs, higher wages, and
22 more economic growth.

23 So on November 3rd when you walk into
24 that voting booth, say yes to the one true
25 choice for better schools, Initiative 42.

1 Thank you.

2 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you,
3 Ms. Nordstrom.

4 Now we're at the public commentary part
5 of our discussion today, and so we would ask
6 each of you to speak distinctly. This lady
7 will be transcribing everything, so slowly and
8 distinctly. And each of you have two to three
9 minutes.

10 And we will start with Michael McNeese.
11 I met Mr. McNeese coming in. Mr. McNeese is
12 from Mooreville, Mississippi, and he rises in
13 favor of Section 42.

14 *MR. MCNEESE:* Years ago I was a
15 teacher of American Government, and I want
16 to tell you an amendment to the Constitution
17 is a terrible way to make law. That's a
18 terrible way to make law. But we have to
19 because we've been put in a terrible
20 situation by our legislators. Our
21 legislators -- who in northeast Mississippi
22 we've always elected legislators who say
23 they're going to go to Jackson and they're
24 going to support public schools. But we've
25 had some lately who've gone down, and

1 they've voted against public schools every
2 chance they've had. Every chance.

3 This year our school teachers got a pay
4 raise, but our legislators made sure that pay
5 raise was so small, it would stay well below
6 the surrounding states, well below the
7 southeastern average. So you give us a pay
8 raise, but you make sure it stays nice and
9 small and manageable. That's not right. That
10 is not right.

11 Now, there's not enough money to fund
12 MAEP, but some of our legislators wanted to
13 give a big tax cut to people. Now, how are
14 you going to cut taxes when you can't fund
15 MAEP, you can't fund the schools? You've got
16 to take that money and do something with it.

17 Years ago, about '08 or '09, you may
18 remember there was a financial crisis, there
19 was an economic crisis, and money quit coming
20 into the coffers down in Jackson. The state
21 did what they had to do. They did what they
22 should have done. They cut money to schools.
23 And we kind of understood that that's the way
24 it had to be. But the money's been coming
25 back, as you've heard. The money's been

1 coming back to Jackson, but it hasn't been
2 coming through to the schools.

3 If we're going to get our state off the
4 bottom in so many areas, we've got to educate
5 our kids. One of the ways we're going to get
6 these kids educated is to provide more,
7 smarter, better teachers and give them some
8 good working conditions.

9 Back in '08 or '09 you may recall they
10 sent a lot of assistant teachers home.
11 Classroom sizes got large. Textbooks started
12 getting old and worn out. You know, there's a
13 law that says you've got to replace school
14 buses every once in a while, but I think
15 everybody kind of started ignoring that
16 because the money wasn't there. So now we've
17 got old raggedy school buses still on the
18 road. We've got textbooks that need to be
19 replaced and teachers in need of a little bit
20 a pay raise, a little bit of respect.

21 It's a terrible way to make law, but
22 I've got faith in the Mississippi Supreme
23 Court -- which is elected, by the way, and not
24 just by the folks down in Jackson -- but the
25 State Supreme Court will take care of it.

1 Thank you.

2 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Mr. Louis Schuh.

3 Mr. Schuh rises in opposition to Section 42.

4 *MR. SCHUH:* I'm Louis Schuh from
5 Tupelo, Mississippi.

6 And I agree that a constitutional
7 amendment is a terrible way to make law, and
8 that's why I oppose Initiative 42. I mean,
9 you know, everyone here seems to be angry at
10 the legislature, and I understand that anger.
11 Yes, we should be mad at them for not fully
12 funding MAEP like they're legally required to
13 do, even though, you know, we all recognize
14 it's the natural right of the legislature.

15 But the accountability for the
16 legislature doesn't come from the judges. It
17 should come from me and you. If you really
18 disagree with what your legislature is doing,
19 vote them out of office. Don't sit here and
20 amend the Constitution and say, "Let's let
21 this elected judge down in Jackson or the
22 Mississippi State Supreme Court decide, you
23 know, what education funding should be."

24 I don't really trust the Mississippi
25 State Supreme Court more than I trust the

1 state legislators. At least we know our state
2 legislators. How many people here today voted
3 for a judge they have no idea who they are?
4 They just saw their name on the ballot. I
5 think that happens far too much in Mississippi
6 with our nonpartisan judicial elections.
7 There's a R or a D by their name. We don't
8 know what we're voting for. Why would we
9 trust these people who are elected with no
10 information elections over our state
11 legislators?

12 So that's why I oppose Initiative 42,
13 and that's why I oppose moving our education
14 funding from the State Legislature to our
15 state courts.

16 Thank you.

17 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you.

18 Joe Babb from Tupelo. Mr. Babb rises in
19 favor of 42.

20 *MR. BABB:* My name is Joe Babb. I'm a
21 CPA in Tupelo, and I serve on the Tupelo
22 Public School District Board of Trustees.

23 As most of you know, we were fortunate
24 in May to overwhelmingly pass a \$44 million
25 bond issue.

1 From my standpoint, the frustrating part
2 about the bond issue was that we were not able
3 to come to taxpayers with plans for an
4 exciting new facility. We are adding
5 classrooms to two buildings, but the majority
6 of the bond proceeds will be spent on things
7 like repairs, infrastructure upgrades, bus
8 replacements, and new roofs.

9 We were forced to go to our community
10 and ask for permission to borrow money to pay
11 our operating costs. This is simply due to a
12 lack of funding from the state of Mississippi.
13 Had our district been funded as it should have
14 been, we might have been able to invest in
15 that exciting new facility, or we could have
16 seen property taxes decrease. Fortunately,
17 our community stepped up to take care of our
18 district when the legislative leadership
19 refused to do so.

20 I say this not to brag about our
21 community and district, but to point out the
22 sobering fact that Tupelo has one of the
23 highest tax bases in the state of Mississippi.

24 Now consider the poorer districts with
25 minimal tax bases. Consider some communities

1 unwilling to take on bond indebtedness or
2 accept a millage increase.

3 The majority of the districts in this
4 state are almost wholly dependent on the whims
5 of the legislature. Consider the track record
6 of that body as the economy has returned. In
7 two of the preceding four years the
8 legislature had enough surplus revenue to
9 completely fund K through 12 education without
10 taking a penny from a single agency.

11 Here are the facts in regards to other
12 agency increases in this fiscal year compared
13 to 2008 before the great recession. Medicaid
14 has 625 million more dollars. That's a 69
15 percent increase over 2008. Colleges and
16 universities have \$1.3 million. That's a
17 22 percent increase in their budget from 2008.
18 Transportation has 464 million. That's an
19 80 percent increase. Social welfare,
20 130 million. That's a 74 percent increase.
21 Special fund agencies, 192 million;
22 56 percent. The total budget has increased by
23 \$3.1 billion since 2008. K-12 -- are you
24 ready? -- \$63 million; 2.47 percent. That
25 means that for every new tax dollar the

1 legislature appropriated, they dropped two
2 pennies in the public education budget.

3 Remember our coffers are overflowing.
4 we discussed tax cut after tax cut. We have a
5 rainy day fund that legally cannot hold any
6 more money. And a 2.47 percent increase over
7 a six-year period. These are simple facts.

8 Discussions about Hinds County judges
9 and legislative alternatives are disingenuous
10 and meant to distract us from the real issue.
11 If you care about your public schools, do not
12 get hung up on these arguments and support
13 Initiative 42.

14 Thank you.

15 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you, Mr. Babb.
16 Accountants always have their numbers. They
17 keep up with that stuff. I want you to know
18 I asked for a \$845,000 decrease in my budget
19 this past year, so we're trying to help.

20 June Geddie. She rises in opposition to
21 Amendment No. 42.

22 *MS. GEDDIE:* Good evening, everyone.
23 My name is June Geddie.

24 I didn't expect to be here and I didn't
25 expect to speak, but I just in my heart felt I

1 had to speak to you. You're educators, and
2 this is a very important issue, because it
3 goes down to the foundation of our country, of
4 our Constitution, and the separation of
5 powers.

6 I was raised in public education like
7 probably 95 percent of you. And, you know,
8 this is the way the government is changing our
9 structure that our forefathers put down for a
10 reason. Separation of powers is not the way
11 to go.

12 Yes, we have legislators. Yes, we have
13 the ability to vote them out. And part of
14 what I say to people all the time is it's we,
15 the people, that are supposed to stand up and
16 do these things. Not take our structure of
17 government and throw it out the window and
18 say, "we're going to give a judge all this
19 power or the supreme court." That's not how
20 it is. That's not how we were formed.

21 I know there's fear and anger and many
22 things that would make us want to do this more
23 than anything, but we have to let those things
24 go and say there is a way within the structure
25 of our government that we can make a

1 difference. when you start giving away power,
2 when you start giving it to a person that you
3 have no control over -- maybe he's a good man;
4 maybe he's not. we may not know if he's a bad
5 man. what are you going to do? You have no
6 control. we never should give up control.
7 That's why we have separation of powers.
8 There is a reason our forefathers did this.

9 And educators, you should know that. we
10 all took history. I learned that when I was
11 in grade -- not grade school, but, you know,
12 through 7 through 12, whenever it is. I
13 learned about that. And it went deep into my
14 heart because I love this country, and I love
15 what we're founded on. And we can't give it
16 away by fear and frustration. we've seen
17 other countries do that. we've seen the
18 results of giving away that.

19 I want to give you some thoughts. Okay?
20 First off, the initiative, do you -- maybe you
21 don't realize that over \$2 million was spent
22 to get people of Mississippi to sign on. Do
23 you know where that money came from? Out of
24 state. \$1200 came from Mississippi. That
25 ought to tell you something right there, that

1 very fact. It's taking outside influence to
2 change us? I think we can handle ourselves,
3 and I think we -- I would like to see all of
4 you as educators get busy, get involved in
5 your politics, get involved. Don't just sit
6 back and get mad at everybody. Talk to your
7 legislature. We are we the people. That's
8 what made us great, and we will be again. We
9 don't advocate. You know the word "advocate."
10 You don't advocate your rights. That's not
11 okay. That isn't okay.

12 You know, it wouldn't take very much --
13 and they have been put down tonight -- that
14 would take the power away from your
15 representatives and put it into a state agency
16 which is unelected. Really? You've lost your
17 control. You have a judge that you don't
18 elect. If he doesn't do what you like, what
19 are you going to do? Sue him? Do you know
20 other states that have done this are full of
21 litigation? Full of it. What's going to
22 happen then? There are checks and balances
23 for a reason. You know that.

24 And that's why I say to you stand up for
25 us. Stand up for we, the people, and do it.

1 take your frustrations and take it where it
2 needs to be. Take it to your representatives.
3 Stand up, but don't give away your rights.
4 That is a poor choice for promises.

5 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you, Ms. Geddie.

6 *MS. GEDDIE:* Thank you.

7 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Joyce Helmick from
8 Hernando, Mississippi. Ms. Helmick has
9 spoken before. Is she still here? There
10 she is.

11 *MS. HELMICK:* Good evening. It's
12 great to see this crowd here tonight.

13 I am Joyce Helmick. I'm the mother of
14 two graduating public school students. I'm
15 the grandmother of the cutest little
16 kindergartener you've ever seen in Hernando,
17 Mississippi. I am also a 37-year-veteran of
18 the public schools in Mississippi.
19 Twenty-five of those were in DeSoto County.
20 Two of my students -- Amber and Charlie, raise
21 your hand over there. Amber is now teaching
22 freshman English at University of Mississippi,
23 and Charlie is an artist.

24 Tonight I speak as president of the
25 Mississippi Association of Educators,

1 representing thousands of educators across the
2 state. MAE supports Initiative 42 because we
3 know that it is the only way that we can
4 assure that our legislators provide funding
5 that gets our students the tools and the
6 resources and the support that they need.

7 Our members are feverishly supporting
8 Initiative 42 and campaigning with parents and
9 friends to support Initiative 42 across this
10 state. We know that Initiative 42 will ensure
11 that our lawmakers will fulfill the promise
12 made to our students.

13 I, in my position, have a unique
14 situation. I have traveled across this state,
15 and I have been in school after school after
16 school, and I can tell you that our lawmakers
17 have not given what they have promised.

18 I was in a school today just 30 minutes
19 north of here. There was a thunderstorm and
20 it rained. The principal was supposed to meet
21 with me. He came running into the room, and
22 his pants were wet from knee down, and his
23 shoes were soaking. I can tell you that he
24 told me -- and it is true, Mr. Latino -- three
25 of his classrooms were pouring rainwater. He

1 had also told me that one of his awnings that
2 protected the students as they left the
3 school -- and it was almost time for school to
4 be out -- had fallen. So he was trying to
5 figure out how to make sure the students could
6 get to the bus safely.

7 MAE sponsors a reading contest. Some of
8 our students in some of our schools do not
9 have books at home. That should not surprise
10 any of you. And we say, "Check the books out
11 at the library and take them home." And our
12 educators tell us, "We don't have enough books
13 in our library for our students to take books
14 home for your project." And we're only asking
15 six books each.

16 In one school I went to today about 30
17 minutes north of here, I walked in and it felt
18 pretty good. It was cool. And the secretary
19 said, "Oh, we are so happy to get relief from
20 the heat."

21 And I said, you know, "You have the air
22 conditioning. It should feel pretty good."

23 "Not last week we didn't have air
24 conditioning. We cannot support that kind of
25 heat from the air conditioning that we have in

1 our schools. Our students were suffering. It
2 was hot."

3 In another school that I visited there
4 were 37 students in a fifth-grade class. Let
5 me repeat that. Thirty-seven students in a
6 fifth-grade class.

7 I can tell you that our promises have
8 been broken, and it is real. And we have
9 asked for something to be done about it, and
10 it has not been done.

11 Now, that other one -- you know, the
12 decoy? -- now I'm here because I'm a good
13 Mississippi girl. And I know that every
14 decoy, when brought home, does not put meat on
15 the table.

16 Thank you. We support Initiative 42.

17 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you, Ms. Helmick.

18 Mr. Grant Sowell. Mr. Sowell is from
19 Tupelo, Mississippi, and he rises in
20 opposition to Section 42.

21 *MR. SOWELL:* Thank you. It's my
22 pleasure to be here and see a full house of
23 people who are interested in education.

24 I'm a product of public education, so if
25 you hear what I say and you like it, there you

1 go. If you don't, there you go.

2 when I was in school, we would say the
3 Pledge of Allegiance every morning. I
4 remember Gideons coming to our school and
5 pulling out Bibles and giving them to each
6 student. My, how times have changed. Now I
7 do mission trips. When I go into Honduras,
8 kids run up to me and are so excited in public
9 schools to receive that Gospel of Jesus
10 Christ. We don't have that freedom in America
11 anymore in the public schools? Something is
12 bad wrong. And it's got more to do than
13 money.

14 If it had to do with money -- and I
15 believe Russell Latino and his numbers, and I
16 trust his figures. If it had to do with
17 money, we would have already obtained funding
18 a long time ago, because we keep putting an
19 enormous amount of our budget into education,
20 yet the results aren't getting us there.

21 Now, I know the teachers here work hard
22 and are good people. Most every one of you
23 are good people who love students and want to
24 see success. I want to see success too. But
25 is 42 going to get us there? That's the

1 question I have for you.

2 As someone who considers myself a
3 patriot, who loves his country and loves my
4 state, loves children -- I've served as a
5 youth pastor for over 20 years -- I want to
6 tell you that I'm concerned about the future
7 of this country; I'm concerned about our
8 children; and I'm concerned about education.
9 I don't think just more money is going to get
10 us there. I think better management of money
11 is going to get us there.

12 I think teachers who work hard ought to
13 get paid fair. They ought to get paid good,
14 because that's a very noble position. I
15 respect each and every one of you. I think
16 our kids deserve better than what they're
17 getting. I think the school should have
18 appropriate materials, books, and buses.

19 But is a judge going to give us the
20 right answer? Well, *Roe v. Wade* didn't turn
21 out so well if you believe in life. If you
22 believe in traditional values, same sex
23 marriage didn't turn out too well. And I have
24 a feeling this ain't going to turn out too
25 well either if it ends up going to a judge.

1 In addition to that, do you want to give
2 your elected voice -- your elected
3 representatives your voice, which is your
4 representative with your voice, do you want to
5 trade that out for a judge? what if, as June
6 Geddie said, what if this guy's idea of
7 adequate funding doesn't match your
8 legislator's? what do you do then? Go back
9 to those legislators that you threw under the
10 bus? why don't you work with your legislators
11 and try to make things happen in a more
12 productive way -- is what I would encourage
13 you to do.

14 Adequate funding equals tax hikes. That
15 comes not from a politician or elected state
16 official, but from a taxpayer. I already fund
17 kids 1st through 12, K through 12.

18 And I want to tell you I'm here today to
19 say money is not the answer. 42 is not the
20 answer. God bless. I'm against 42.

21 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you.

22 Charles Penson from Tupelo. Mr. Penson
23 rises in favor of Amendment 42.

24 *MR. PENSON:* Good evening. I'm
25 Charles Penson. And in the interest of full

1 disclosure, I would like to say that I am
2 running for State Representative House
3 District 17. And I am one of those that
4 went out and beat the pavement to gather
5 signatures for Initiative 42. So of course
6 I am for Initiative 42.

7 About three weeks ago we had a public
8 forum among the candidates that are running
9 for my particular seat. And I would just like
10 to tell you that in a public forum that was
11 actually recorded, I said to the question,
12 "will you vote yes for Initiative 42?" "Yes.
13 Yes." My opponent said "No." That ought to
14 tell you something right there.

15 why am I running? I passed out this
16 campaign card. I've passed out about 7,000 of
17 them so far. And it says "For our children."
18 I am running for our children because I
19 believe that our children need the best
20 education available to them if they are going
21 to have a good quality of life. If they are
22 going to live as good a life as I have lived,
23 they need to have a good strong foundation,
24 which education provides.

25 Now, as I look at what has been going on

1 in our state -- and Merrill, she laid it out
2 absolutely perfectly right about what's going
3 on. But as I look back and say, "well, since
4 1997 when the law was enacted, over
5 \$1.7 billion of school funding has not gone
6 out over the life of MAEP?" Since 1997 only
7 two times have we fully funded MAEP?

8 when we talk about taxes, I talk about
9 the \$44 million bond issue that passed in
10 Tupelo -- not to build a new school, but to
11 provide maintenance. You heard our local
12 school board member, Mr. Babb. That was
13 mostly for maintenance. The same thing our
14 county school district, \$13.5 million. We
15 have got to do something.

16 We went out and got almost 200,000
17 people to say, "Yes, we want to fully fund
18 MAEP." And what did our legislature do? They
19 passed an alternative to try to defeat it. I
20 agree with my opponents on this. One of the
21 things we need to do is vote out those
22 legislators that don't support the education
23 of our children. Get them out of office. And
24 I think you've already seen part of that
25 happen already in the primary, so we need to

1 continue.

2 I am tired of being 50th in the nation.
3 Are you tired of being 50th in all the
4 education categories? I'm tired. Vote for
5 Initiative 42 on November 3rd.

6 Thank you.

7 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you.

8 James Andrew Whitaker from Baldwin,
9 Mississippi. Is Mr. Whitaker here? Is he
10 still here? There he is in the back. He's
11 from Baldwin, Mississippi, and he rises in
12 opposition to Initiative 42.

13 *MR. WHITAKER:* I'm James Andrew
14 Whitaker. I'm a teacher at one of our state
15 great public universities, the University of
16 Mississippi. I hope the Mississippi State
17 fans aren't going to hold that against me
18 too much.

19 If you don't mind, I'm not going to use
20 the microphone. I graduated from Baldwin High
21 School in 2001.

22 *UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER:* We
23 can't hear you.

24 *MR. WHITAKER:* I graduated from
25 Baldwin High School in 2001. I attended the

1 University of Mississippi as an
2 undergraduate student. My father started
3 out his career in education. Started out as
4 a public high school teacher; moved on to a
5 principal, assistant superintendent, et
6 cetera. Education was stressed in my
7 household growing up.

8 And that being said, everyone supports
9 public education. Public education doesn't
10 really have any opponents. Maybe a couple of
11 people here and there, but very, very few.
12 Everyone supports public education.

13 That being said, though, we have to
14 actually consider who controls the funding for
15 our public education. This is not an issue to
16 wave away. It's not an issue that we should
17 just simply simplify and talk about pro
18 education versus anti education.

19 *UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER:* You
20 need to go to the mike.

21 *UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER:* It's a
22 mobile mike. You can take it off.

23 *MR. WHITAKER:* All right. So the
24 constitutional balance of powers that places
25 taxation and tax appropriation with the

1 legislature, this traces all the way back to
2 the Middle Ages. It goes back to the Magna
3 Carta when we had centralization of power in
4 Britain where our founding forbearers lived.
5 That placed taxation power with the king.
6 The king controlled that completely. That
7 type of centralization led to abuses. And
8 over time we developed a system where
9 taxation and tax appropriations would be
10 vested in the people's representatives.

11 western countries has been the model for
12 several centuries now since the Medieval Ages,
13 and it's been considered the best way of doing
14 things.

15 well, today we're not centralizing power
16 in taxations purposes, so to speak, or tax
17 appropriation purposes with the king now, but
18 we're putting it in the hands of judges. This
19 is very different, but at the same time we're
20 centralizing that power again in a way that is
21 not representative to the people in our state.
22 That is going to lead to abuses. Judges,
23 generally speaking, consider on a case-by-case
24 basis considering school district tax and the
25 particular injunctive relief that they might

1 see necessary in each school district tax.
2 They are not considering statewide budgets.
3 They're not considering policy issues.
4 They're not considering what areas of the
5 state may need more funding or less funding.
6 They're considering that one narrow issue.

7 And if we centralize power in them on
8 this issue, on this issue of tax
9 appropriations -- in other words, public
10 school funding -- then the end result of that
11 is our budgets become unbalanced. They become
12 imbalanced in various ways. The end result
13 being that the judge gives massive amounts of
14 money to this particular school district and
15 then to this particular school district. What
16 are we going to do with public safety? What
17 are we going to do with corrections? What are
18 we going to do with other divisions of state
19 services? Those suddenly have massive funding
20 gaps. Where are we going to come up with that
21 money? Mississippi has limited financial
22 resources.

23 The power of tax appropriation needs to
24 be placed in an entity, the legislature, that
25 is able to consider that, because they

1 consider that in terms of all the needs of the
2 state and not simply the needs of one school
3 district or another school district on a
4 case-by-case basis.

5 All right. Secondly -- or thirdly --
6 there is a lack of specificity in Initiative
7 42 that effectively makes it open-ended. We
8 have no earthly idea what they're going to
9 do -- the judges -- when they have control of
10 one of these issues coming before them for
11 injunctive relief.

12 Proponents of Initiative 42 primarily
13 emphasize that it's going to shore up the
14 deficits in the MAEP formula as seen in the
15 state budget. However, there's nothing
16 specifically that would limit it to that or
17 that would even necessarily target it to that.
18 It can be open-ended as to what injunctive
19 relief means. That is not a well-defined
20 term, and that distinctly matters when it
21 comes to handing down this power to a court --
22 in this case, a judge, like I said.

23 So control of education funding, the
24 concern of the state budgets. And then with
25 the state budgets we have to consider our

1 development. Education is very key to
2 development as many people have pointed out on
3 the larger debate that's going on on this
4 topic. In order for Mississippi to develop,
5 we need well-educated people who are able to
6 create jobs, to take on jobs, to push our
7 economy forward. But at the same time we
8 suddenly have funding cuts coming from
9 imbalanced budgets, coming from centralization
10 of tax appropriation powers in the judiciary.
11 Then suddenly we can't attract these large
12 industries anymore. We can't suddenly apply
13 funding to public safety. We can't put money
14 in roadways. We can't put money to
15 infrastructure. We can't put money to other
16 state services that make the state attractive
17 to live in. And so subsequently our
18 development suffers.

19 There are countries in the world that
20 have much better educational systems than the
21 state of Mississippi. I'm not implying
22 Mississippi is a country. But I'm saying
23 there are states in some other countries that
24 certainly have a much better educational
25 system. But yet unemployment is higher,

1 poverty is higher, and the economy is much
2 poorer.

3 And why is that? well, education
4 without the larger ability to attract capital,
5 without the larger ability to attract a
6 job-creating infrastructure, it doesn't really
7 result in a better way of life.

8 So I would urge you to vote against 42.
9 Public education is important. Public
10 education should be supported. But changing
11 our Constitution in this way and centralizing
12 this kind of power against our history,
13 against the history of western democracy, into
14 the hands of judges is the wrong step.

15 Thank you.

16 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you.

17 Scott Reed. He rises in support of
18 Initiative 42.

19 *MR. REED:* Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

20 It was suggested to me that I may have
21 something helpful to say about this issue as a
22 businessman in Mississippi. It would be
23 impossible for me to look at this issue from
24 just that one viewpoint.

25 I was a student, now a parent, and now a

1 businessman who owns my own business and three
2 family businesses, and other businesses I
3 share the responsibility of creating, last
4 count -- which was this afternoon, so I'm
5 pretty sure I'm accurate -- 197 jobs in this
6 area.

7 As a member of the board of the North
8 Mississippi Medical Center, I have the
9 responsibility for overseeing effectiveness of
10 hundreds of jobs. And as a member of the
11 board of Community Development Foundation, I
12 help them work to bring job creators to our
13 area.

14 From this perspective I can tell you
15 that few days go by without a conversation
16 about the importance of an educated work
17 force. It's not one of the most important
18 challenges to our success in Mississippi, it
19 is the ultimate challenge for our success.
20 For people like me, to sustain Mississippi is
21 critical to our economy.

22 My father likes to say "Our children, if
23 educated, are our greatest assets. If
24 uneducated, are our greatest liability."

25 As a student I graduated from Tupelo

1 High School in 1976. I worked in Tennessee,
2 North Carolina, and Texas before moving home.
3 I have no doubt that the importance of a great
4 education was something my parents held dear.
5 They sent me out to succeed and represent our
6 state in the world, but they had the ability
7 to help me achieve that goal. I was not
8 home-schooled, but I was certainly schooled at
9 home a lot. So many families don't have that
10 option these days because more and more
11 families have to generate two incomes to
12 survive.

13 My children attend Tupelo High School.
14 I came here from their open house tonight, and
15 it made me just a tad late.

16 We're lucky in Tupelo. Our schools are
17 above average. But that's the problem here.
18 Tupelo could be so much more. I don't want to
19 believe that there are schools all over the
20 state that don't have the opportunities that
21 we have right here. Where we are right now in
22 Tupelo should be that average in our state.

23 As for Initiative 42, on the surface it
24 seems to do exactly what everybody wants. It
25 places our children's education at the top of

1 the priority list for our state. We've all
2 said it should be there, but we're just having
3 to put it in writing.

4 And, by the way, I do believe the people
5 I talked to regarding this issue all seemed to
6 have the interest of the children at heart,
7 regardless of their feelings on this issue.

8 It's a dangerous place to say this. My
9 father used to say, "It's great to be among
10 friends, even if they're not your own." But I
11 know Tate Reeves very well, and I consider him
12 a friend. He's in favor of 42A over 42. I
13 know Tate's a smart man, and I know he wants
14 to do right by education. I simply hope we
15 can respectfully disagree on how we get that
16 done this time.

17 This debate isn't about whether we have
18 the money to fund education. We've always
19 found the money to do what we have to do.
20 It's not about getting fat out of the
21 government. Does anybody here remember a year
22 where there was no fat in the government? If
23 we wait for that, we will never fund education
24 appropriately.

25 This debate is about our mission

1 statement and what it should be in
2 Mississippi. What do we hold dear and what
3 are we willing to do for those things that we
4 do hold dear? An initiative that plainly
5 states we hold the future of our children in
6 the highest regard seems to be reasonable to
7 me.

8 Lastly, I know that many legislators
9 don't like the idea of the courts to be used
10 to assure accountability, and I don't blame
11 them. I don't know of anybody that likes the
12 idea of being sued. I can't stand the idea of
13 frivolous lawsuits clogging up our courtrooms.
14 But courts do have their place, and our court
15 system is better than most. If our historical
16 perspective on this was brighter, I might
17 actually be against the language in Initiative
18 42, but it is not.

19 You don't have to look very far back to
20 see what we've done with a distant promise.
21 The closest second to education would have to
22 be healthcare in our state. In 1998
23 Mississippi became a national model for how to
24 manage our tobacco payments. We vowed to put
25 them in a trust where the principal was deemed

1 to be [inaudible]. It could never be touched
2 in perpetuity. What I did not know at the
3 time was "perpetuity" was defined as two
4 years.

5 In 2000 the legislature began to divert
6 payments from the trust, and now the trust is
7 all but empty instead of the approximately
8 \$2.5 billion that should be there for
9 healthcare. Every year there is a good reason
10 why we just can't put the healthcare money
11 back like they promised, just as they have had
12 good reasons every year not to put money in
13 education that was promised.

14 But that's the great thing about mission
15 statements. They force you to do the right
16 thing even when it's hard. Without
17 accountability, I'm really afraid that our
18 education dollars may just wind up like our
19 healthcare trust. And that's why I support
20 42. I hope you'll join me.

21 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Cal Smith. Mr. Smith,
22 is he here? Cal Smith? He signed up. Last
23 call. Is that you, Cal? He is speaking in
24 opposition.

25 They tell me I've got to go to the back

1 and catch an interview, so Jeremy will be
2 picking up from here and will continue in the
3 same vein.

4 So, Jeremy, after Mr. Smith, you can
5 take over.

6 *MR. SMITH:* I am in favor of 42A.

7 Recently I was visiting with a young
8 mother. She's a young mother of preschoolers.
9 And she said, "You know, I am afraid to send
10 my children to school."

11 And I said, "Well, why?"

12 well, her husband is a professional
13 engineer, as I am. I know I've had my
14 fourth-grade neighbor kids come over and say,
15 "Cal, will you help me with our homework?"
16 Couldn't do it, even though I'm about two or
17 three short hours short of a degree in
18 mathematics.

19 So I'm wondering what our kids are
20 really learning. This fuzzy math -- I know
21 mathematics is a basic fundamental of
22 education, and it is used in engineering. If
23 we use fuzzy math, we'd see airplanes falling
24 out of the sky; we'd see buildings collapsing.
25 You name it.

1 She said also one of the schools that
2 she lives close by had a month long dealing
3 with great people. Very few of our founding
4 fathers were even mentioned. However, people
5 like Cesar Chavez, a great person.

6 That's all I wanted to say. It doesn't
7 look like we're getting our money's worth.

8 *MR. MARTIN:* Thank you, Mr. Smith.

9 Next up is Amanda Koonlaba from
10 saltillo, Mississippi.

11 *MS. KOONLABA:* My name is Amanda
12 Koonlaba. I'm from saltillo, Mississippi,
13 and I'm a teacher here in Tupelo.

14 I care about this state, and I went into
15 teaching to make a difference here. I wanted
16 it to be my job to help improve the lives of
17 Mississippians, and I'm here to tell you
18 tonight that we don't have enough money to do
19 our jobs.

20 I co-administrate a blog called "Show
21 and Tell Mississippi" where we ask people from
22 around the state to share their stories
23 related to education funding. There are
24 stories of teachers dumpster diving for
25 textbooks. One teacher even wrote that she

1 was forced to make a choice between buying
2 supplies for her classroom or buying diapers
3 for her own children. I am not okay with
4 this, and I don't know how anyone can be okay
5 with this. Is this really the Mississippi
6 that you want to live in?

7 It's my job to stand up for students. I
8 signed a contract and agreed to abide by the
9 Mississippi Educator Code of Ethics that
10 states "Ethical conduct includes advocating
11 for fair and equitable opportunities for all
12 children."

13 I want everyone here to understand that
14 our state leaders would like to shut down our
15 public schools to make way for privatization.
16 Just a couple of weeks ago our fearless leader
17 told Tupelo, Mississippi, that if 42 passes,
18 we might have to fund art education. What is
19 Tupelo going to do without art education?
20 What would this community do without its arts?

21 We have the opportunity right now to
22 send a message to them that we want our public
23 schools to remain public, and we want them
24 fully funded.

25 Now is the time for Mississippians to

1 stand up to the legislature and remind them
2 they work for us, not lobbyists and not big
3 corporations.

4 Thank you.

5 *MR. MARTIN:* Next speaking in favor of
6 Initiative 42 is Mr. Fred Pitts of Tupelo.

7 *MR. PITTS:* My name is Fred Pitts, and
8 I live here in Tupelo. Born and raised in
9 Mississippi. Educated myself, my two boys,
10 and grandchildren in the public schools.

11 I don't know about you, but I'm confused
12 about a lot of things except one that we've
13 heard here tonight. Can anybody guess what
14 that one thing is I'm not confused about? Our
15 teachers and our schools are not being funded
16 adequately to educate our kids the way they
17 should be educated. I find it appalling and
18 surprised -- I can't believe that at the age
19 of 72 I'm having to stand here in front of a
20 group and tell you why public education is
21 important.

22 Fund our schools. Fund our pre-Ks.
23 Make it mandatory.

24 All the studies show and there have been
25 communities in our state and in some others

1 that have a strong pre-K program -- and we
2 have a good pre-K program in Tupelo -- but
3 those students coming out of pre-K are ready
4 to learn in the first grade.

5 Fund and demand quality education. We
6 can't just fund it, parents, and turn our back
7 on it. It has to start at home, and it has to
8 start with parents. We've heard tonight that
9 parents work two jobs. They can't do like my
10 parents. My parents worked two jobs, but they
11 still instilled in me the quality of life,
12 behavior, kinds of behavior, and what I should
13 do in school; and they made sure that my
14 homework was done, no matter what time I got
15 through with it.

16 Public schools bring jobs to our
17 community. I was an elected official in this
18 city for four years as a city councilman. I
19 worked with the city, I worked with my
20 supervisors, and worked with other community
21 areas to bring jobs and businesses to this
22 community. And I can tell you that we have no
23 idea how many manufacturing companies, how
24 many professionals, how many family members
25 will look online, look at our public school

1 system, look at our city, and determine
2 without ever visiting here that they don't
3 want to live here.

4 public schools, good healthcare systems,
5 and safety and quality of life is what people
6 look for.

7 I have a physician friend of mine who
8 could have gone anywhere in the United States.
9 Already had his license to practice in Texas.
10 Met his wife in Texas. But he chose to come
11 here because of our healthcare system and
12 because of our public schools. This is a
13 physician. He could afford to send his kids
14 to private school if he wanted to, but he
15 chose -- and he will stand here and tell
16 you -- public schools and good healthcare
17 system, that's important.

18 As elected officials there are some
19 things in our public schools that need some
20 attention. Our parents rose up. A lot of
21 conversation, a lot of criticism, a lot of
22 finger pointing. There's nothing wrong with
23 that, folks. That's what parents and people
24 that are involved in our schools should do.

25 I hope that same desire in the quality

1 of public schools shown by this community then
2 will turn out and encourage a yes vote for
3 Initiative 42. Let's put the future of our
4 city, state, and county first, country first,
5 by providing the children a well-funded public
6 education.

7 Thank you.

8 *MR. MARTIN:* Next speaking in favor of
9 Initiative 42 is Mr. Clint Gannon from
10 Mooreville, Mississippi.

11 *MR. GANNON:* It is such an honor to be
12 here tonight. My name is Clint Gannon, and
13 I am a candidate for House District 19 from
14 the Mooreville community. My wife happens
15 to be a first-grade teacher at Parkway in
16 Tupelo.

17 I came here tonight to talk to you about
18 42 and my unwavering support of the
19 initiative. People say a constitutional
20 amendment is a bad way to do government.
21 Well, a constitutional amendment gave women
22 the right to vote and abolished slavery. So
23 there's a lot of things you can do with a
24 constitutional amendment.

25 I can't believe we're fighting this

1 battle again. You know, the teachers marched
2 on Jackson to get their pay raise. Now our
3 teachers that are the lowest paid in the
4 country. We're paying less per student than
5 anyone in the country. Our school systems are
6 failing. I was at a school in the district in
7 Mooreville, and they said, "We have a roof
8 that's been leaking for over a decade. And
9 the only reason we got it fixed is because we
10 had hail damage and we could file it on our
11 insurance." It had nothing to do with the
12 legislature. The administrator said, "We got
13 lucky and got a hailstorm." That's something
14 you don't hear every day.

15 This is not a Democratic issue; this is
16 not a Republican issue, my friends. This is a
17 moral issue. The road, they say, out of the
18 courthouse runs right through the schoolhouse.
19 You've got to pave the road first. Let me say
20 that. We have a problem with that in the
21 state.

22 But if you want better jobs to come to
23 this state, you've got to have better schools.
24 We are very fortunate to have so many men and
25 women who dedicate their life to public

1 education. Not just buying rulers, backpacks,
2 and pencils; they're buying food and clothing.
3 Our educators have dedicated their lives to
4 public service. That's why I'm running and
5 standing up for educators like my wife. I saw
6 Ms. Joanna Peugh, the principal at Mooreville
7 Elementary.

8 This is what makes our country great, a
9 public forum, and that's why we need to vote
10 yes for Initiative 42, for the betterment and
11 welfare of our children, to stand up without
12 hesitation and give them the future that we
13 need to give them.

14 Thank you. God bless you, and God
15 please the great state of Mississippi.

16 *MR. MARTIN:* Adrian Shipman to speak
17 in favor of Initiative 42.

18 *MS. SHIPMAN:* Thank you.

19 My name is Adrian Shipman, and I'm from
20 Oxford, Mississippi. I'm the mother of two
21 public school children.

22 I'm going to be honest with you. I'm
23 supporting Initiative 42 for one reason. I
24 believe it's the only way our legislature is
25 going to be held accountable to fully fund

1 education. I do not believe it should be
2 optional for our lawmakers to abide by the
3 laws. That does not make sense to me.

4 The alternative was put on the ballot to
5 cloud this issue. We cannot be caught in that
6 trap. When I put all these policies aside, I
7 see our state failing our children. We must
8 do more than just individually support
9 Initiative 42. We must educate our friends
10 and our neighbors to believe in Initiative 42
11 for our children.

12 I encourage you to work hard to get
13 voters committed to vote yes to 42 over the
14 next 12 weeks. We can't just hope that 42 is
15 going to pass on November 3rd. We must all
16 work to make that happen. I think we can all
17 agree the children of Mississippi deserve that
18 from us.

19 Thank you.

20 *MR. MARTIN:* Ray Hill from Oxford,
21 Mississippi, to speak in favor of Initiative
22 42.

23 *MR. HILL:* Good evening. My name is
24 Ray Hill, and I am the proud father of two
25 little boys who attend the Oxford Public

1 schools.

2 Giving our schools the money they need
3 to educate our children seems like such an
4 obvious thing to do. You wonder why certain
5 politicians in Jackson would oppose it. Well,
6 all you need to do to answer that question is
7 to do a little research on the people and
8 groups who are funding these politicians. Who
9 are they and what do they want?

10 Who are they is a special interest PAC
11 known as Empower Mississippi. Their stated
12 goal is for the expansion of for-profit
13 charter schools at the expense of our public
14 schools. This group is funded by out-of-state
15 billionaires who see school choice issues,
16 charter schools, as a way to line their own
17 pockets at the expense of Mississippi
18 children.

19 So now that we know who they are, let's
20 figure out what do they want. What do they
21 want is money. They want your money. They
22 want your tax dollars in their pockets. They
23 want your tax dollars to go to their
24 for-profit schools -- schools that won't let
25 everyone in, schools that won't provide the

1 resources that the children need, and charter
2 schools that will siphon off our much needed
3 tax dollars. We simply cannot allow groups
4 like Empower Mississippi and special interests
5 to destroy our school districts.

6 I urge you as we get closer to November
7 to follow the money trail, see exactly who
8 Empower PAC is giving their money to. Senate
9 Education Chairman from Oxford, Gray Tollison,
10 accepted \$2,500 from Empower Mississippi PAC.
11 Lieutenant Governor Tate Reeves accepted
12 \$5,000 from Empower Mississippi PAC.

13 And then we have the case of Mr. Steve
14 Hopkins from DeSoto County, Mississippi. You
15 may have heard about Steve Hopkins. He beat
16 the incumbent in the primary, Wanda Jennings,
17 a lady who had stood up to privatizing groups
18 like the Empower PAC because of her support
19 for the public schools in DeSoto County. How
20 was Steve Hopkins able to do that? Well,
21 Empower PAC gave Steve Hopkins \$32,800. Think
22 about that for a minute. Let that sink in.
23 Some people might say Empower PAC bought that
24 election.

25 Certain people wonder tonight why we

1 might want to take legislators out of the
2 funding process -- because of the Empower PACs
3 of the world. It's scary, because Empower PAC
4 isn't going away. They're going to bring that
5 money here to Lee County. They're going to
6 bring that money to Lafayette County. They're
7 going to bring that money all over north
8 Mississippi until they can privatize our
9 public school system.

10 How do we stand up to Empower PAC? How
11 do we stop them? 42. 42 is one of the ways
12 to do that because it stops Empower PAC in its
13 tracks by giving our children the
14 constitutional right to the very best
15 education possible and forces the legislature
16 to follow the law once and for all, regardless
17 of how much money Empower PAC and their
18 friends throw at them.

19 It's time to stand up for our kids.
20 It's time to stand up for our teachers. It's
21 time to stand up and support Initiative 42.

22 Thank you.

23 *MR. MARTIN:* Chuck Garrett to speak in
24 favor of Initiative 42 from New Albany,
25 Mississippi.

1 *MR. GARRETT:* I had some things
2 prepared, but I decided just to kind of
3 address some things first.

4 First, two cents out of ever dollar for
5 the last seven years seems amazing. It's
6 important to remember that the only time that
7 the percent goes to education would increase
8 would be at times when the state budget has
9 increased by at least 3 percent. In those
10 cases we would only get a quarter of that
11 increase. So over time we're asking for a
12 quarter of 3 percent increases until we're
13 fully funded. No tax increase; none of that
14 kind of thing.

15 I then want to say the legislature has
16 been in charge of education for over 200
17 years, and we're 50th.

18 It was said that the average per pupil
19 expenditure was \$2,000 in 1970. well, I
20 promise you it's a whole lot closer to \$4,000
21 right now than it is \$8500 per student of the
22 state's portion. There are districts like
23 Tupelo who get more money from the local
24 taxpayers than they do from the state. More
25 money from local taxpayers than they do from

1 the state. Imagine a school district who
2 didn't get that other 55 percent. There are
3 property poor districts all over the state
4 that if all they get is what the state
5 provides, they're getting less than half per
6 pupil of what Tupelo gets.

7 we're lucky. I'm from New Albany.
8 we're lucky. We have businesses. We have
9 industries. We're not property poor for the
10 most part. But it makes a huge difference.

11 The legislature will still be able to
12 write laws. They'll still be able to enact
13 laws that will turn into policy. All that
14 will happen is that people will have an
15 opportunity to redress issues if they want to
16 in the court just like they've always had. It
17 will still be something that could be appealed
18 to the supreme court. There's nothing new in
19 any of that. It just so happens that in
20 education it was written in such a way that
21 that wasn't possible. And, by the way, that's
22 been changed two times in the last almost 60
23 years.

24 42 was proposed by over 200,000 people.
25 42A was proposed by about a half-dozen

1 legislators. I have no idea why they would go
2 against 200,000 Mississippians.

3 It's been said that everybody wants
4 public schools. That's just not true. One
5 time when we were trying to get the teachers a
6 pay raise, I was talking to a legislator, and
7 I told him, "we really need a pay raise to
8 compete with other states."

9 He said, "I can't be for a pay raise for
10 public school teachers."

11 I said, "why not?"

12 "My kids go to private school, and
13 private schools can't keep up with that
14 salary. I have to keep it low so private
15 schools can compete."

16 He said that to me. Said it directly to
17 me.

18 This next part is kind of personal. I
19 have a daughter and son-in-law who graduated
20 from college last year, and they're teachers.
21 They looked for jobs in Mississippi, and
22 together they were going to make about
23 \$66,000. They were recruited from some folks
24 out in Texas where they were being offered as
25 a couple right at \$107,000. That's \$41,000

1 difference for the family.

2 My daughter asked me should she go. She
3 asked her brother, who is also a teacher and
4 been teaching for eight years in Mississippi,
5 "should I go?"

6 My son immediately said, "Yeah, go.
7 Because ultimately retirement and everything
8 is based on your salary."

9 I never would answer her. I love
10 Mississippi. I think what we do here is
11 valuable. There's no way I could tell her to
12 leave. There was also no way I could tell her
13 to stay. And I had to leave it to her. And
14 she's teaching just north of Houston, Texas,
15 right now.

16 We have a lot of people doing that.
17 People say we need more teachers. We have
18 lots of teachers if we could just keep them
19 here.

20 One other thing. They said 62 percent
21 of the general fund goes to education. The
22 indication was public education. First of
23 all, the general fund is only half of what's
24 spent. And of that 62 percent includes junior
25 college and IHL. And the real money that goes

1 to K-12 public education is about 40 percent,
2 and that's still just about half of what the
3 state actually spends.

4 Thank you.

5 *MR. MARTIN:* Michelle McCarver from
6 Baldwin, Mississippi, to speak in favor of
7 Initiative 42.

8 *MS. MCCARVER:* My name is Michelle
9 McCarver. I'm from Baldwin, Mississippi.
10 My son is in the fourth grade at Baldwin
11 Elementary.

12 I just wanted to bring this
13 visualization of his math book that he just
14 got two weeks ago. He started school two
15 weeks ago. That's red duct tape.

16 We talked about dumpster diving. I
17 thought about that. It breaks my heart to
18 know that. It's awful.

19 Also, I'm very involved in my son's
20 school. I'm secretary of the PTO, which is
21 really nothing. But last year our PTO gave
22 our school over \$1,000 for paper because they
23 have some kind of budget. I'm not familiar
24 with it. But, anyway, they ran out of paper
25 last year. And that's what our teachers and

1 what our principals wanted. They said, "we
2 need paper." And I thought, "wow." You know,
3 that's a lot of fundraising for us. That's a
4 lot of sales, bouncy house, you know, armbands
5 that we sell. \$1,000. And it's not much,
6 but, gosh.

7 I feel like all the other schools in
8 Mississippi, public education would be able to
9 be able to benefit from 42.

10 *MR. MARTIN:* Jack Reed, Jr., former
11 mayor of your town here, Tupelo, to speak in
12 favor of Initiative 42.

13 *MR. REED:* Thank you, Jeremy.

14 It's getting late, and there's been a
15 lot of comments that have been made, so I'll
16 keep mine to about one minute.

17 I appreciate being introduced as Jack
18 Reed, former mayor. I was once introduced as
19 Mayor Jack Daniels. And I was not even
20 drinking when they looked at me.

21 Anyway, here's my question. Number one,
22 poverty in Mississippi today is particularly
23 challenging. Public education is our greatest
24 weapon against poverty. The success Tupelo
25 has had -- throughout the years we've been

1 committed to public education here in Tupelo,
2 and that's what our economic success is the
3 direct result of, and that's why our quality
4 of life has been a direct result of our
5 commitment to public education.

6 Our legislators -- there have been some
7 smart legislators and certainly have been
8 supporting fully funding MAEP, but they
9 haven't been in the majority. And so I just
10 say to the legislators now, those of us who
11 are supporting Amendment 42 are just saying
12 "Long enough is long enough."

13 Thank you.

14 *MR. MARTIN:* Charlie Buckley.

15 Mr. Buckley is here from Tupelo,
16 Mississippi, to speak in favor of Initiative
17 42.

18 *MR. BUCKLEY:* Hello. I'm Charlie
19 Buckley from right here in Tupelo. My wife
20 and I are both products of Mississippi
21 Public Schools, and we proudly enrolled our
22 daughter in the Tupelo Public School
23 District as well.

24 I am here to urge you all that we can
25 overcome this legislative interruption and

1 achieve the goal of passing Initiative 42 and
2 fully funding MAEP.

3 I don't need to repeat the facts of the
4 case. I feel like that's been pretty well
5 hashed out. But I may need to remind you that
6 we proponents of fully funding MAEP and
7 Initiative 42 are in a battle with forces that
8 are ideologically opposed to a system of free
9 and equal public education for everyone, no
10 matter class or race.

11 A direct political line can be drawn
12 from the sinister tricks played by Governor
13 Ross Barnett to today's Mississippi
14 politicians. There's been a concerted effort
15 since the Civil Rights Era to divert money
16 from the desegregated public schools to
17 purposefully undermine the system in order to
18 point to its eventual failure with the purpose
19 being to discredit, defund, and ultimately
20 destroy public education in Mississippi.

21 Now that we, the people, have finally
22 risen up and achieved an initiative on this
23 year's ballot, the legislative and executive
24 branch, with the help of the Mississippi
25 Supreme Court, are attempting to deceive us

1 once again.

2 There have been many arguments against
3 this initiative, but let me stick to the most
4 important one -- the money. They say we
5 cannot afford to fully fund MAEP. They tell
6 you Mississippi is so poor that we cannot
7 provide an adequate education for our
8 children. And so every year students drop out
9 of our schools because of a faulty education
10 system, and many of them somehow fall into our
11 prisons.

12 According to the numbers I've seen, our
13 schools need \$200 million more a year to be
14 fully funded. But last year alone Mississippi
15 spent \$335 million on prisons. We are trading
16 our children's education for their
17 incarceration.

18 But I want you to know that there's
19 hope. Even with all the games that are being
20 played, we can still pass this initiative. It
21 will take some work on our part, but together
22 as a state we can remind ourselves that we
23 shall overcome the political sabotage that
24 placed this alternative initiative on the
25 ballot. we shall overcome this blatant

1 disregard of the Democratic process. We shall
2 overcome the dark cloud of privatization
3 funded by outside interests and corporate
4 lobbyists who seek to disassemble public
5 education. And when we ultimately pass
6 Initiative 42, we shall overcome the odds and
7 become a state that finally supports our
8 children and our communities, a state that
9 votes out politicians that play games with our
10 schools, a state that rises to the challenge
11 and defeats this political charlatanism. We
12 shall overcome some day.

13 *MR. MCNEESE:* Mr. Buckley, is that
14 your daughter with the white bow in her
15 hair?

16 *MR. BUCKLEY:* Yes.

17 *MR. MARTIN:* She has made my night. I
18 wish all of you could have seen her while
19 her father was speaking up here. That's a
20 proud daughter.

21 Next is Doyce Deas. Ms. Deas is here
22 from Tupelo, and she'll be speaking in favor
23 of Initiative 42.

24 *MS. DEAS:* Good evening. I'm Doyce
25 Deas.

1 From 1976 until 1991 I served on the
2 Tupelo School Board. That's 15 years. There
3 were a lot of meetings. And often I thought,
4 you know, if I just had a dollar for every one
5 of these meetings, that would really fund some
6 things. But it was the most formative
7 experience that I have ever had, truly. It
8 speaks to what I believe today, what I stand
9 for, how I feel about public education.

10 Fortunately, in Tupelo public
11 education -- quality public education -- has
12 always been the most important issue in this
13 community. Unfortunately, that is not the
14 case in a great number of communities across
15 the state.

16 I remember in the '80s when we were
17 fighting the battle -- once again fighting the
18 battle -- for the support of public education.
19 Tupelo took a busload -- a full busload -- of
20 supporters to Jackson. And I remember
21 standing in the Capitol talking to one of
22 our -- actually, one of our local legislators
23 who was about 10 feet tall. And he looked
24 down at me; and he put his, you know, finger
25 in my face, and he said, "No one but you and

1 George McLean want to support public education
2 in Tupelo."

3 And I said, "Well, I'm afraid I have to
4 tell you that is absolutely not the case."

5 Here we are all these years later
6 continuing to fight for public education.
7 It's ludicrous. It's absurd. We should not
8 have to do that.

9 Unfortunately, Mississippi seems to have
10 a terrible problem. We continue to shoot
11 ourselves in the foot. It's obvious that our
12 elected officials are not going to fully
13 support public education. There are a number
14 of communities where it's just not important,
15 and they want to support the private schools.
16 They really don't care about the children who
17 are in the public schools in their community.

18 If we do not fully fund education, we
19 will continue forever to eternity to be number
20 50 in everything that's bad. I'm tired of it.
21 I'm tired of having to fight for every inch of
22 support for public education. I ask you to
23 please support Initiative 42.

24 And, also, I would like to remind the
25 people who keep saying that a judge will make

1 that decision, I do believe when our
2 Constitution was established, there are three
3 branches of government. You know, judicial is
4 one of them, the legislative, and the
5 executive. It is an equal part of our
6 government. So regardless of what would
7 happen, if it had to become a judicial issue,
8 it is still part of the constitutional basis
9 of our communities and our country.

10 Please support Initiative 42.

11 *MR. MARTIN:* Next up is the Honorable
12 Jason Shelton, our current mayor here in
13 Tupelo, to speak in favor of Initiative 42.

14 *MR. SHELTON:* Thank you so much. It's
15 my honor to stand with Democrats and
16 Republicans from all over the state of
17 Mississippi and proudly support Proposition
18 42 for our schools -- for our public schools
19 in the state of Mississippi.

20 And Ms. Deas just spoke. I think it
21 does speak volumes and volumes about the city
22 of Tupelo, Mississippi, that our last four
23 candidates for mayor of the city -- two
24 Republicans and two Democrats -- are all four
25 here for Prop 42.

1 As a lawyer, I can't help but address
2 this judicial stuff. The notion that one
3 judge in Hinds County is going to decide
4 anything is nonsense. A soccer mom from
5 Oxford had the guts to take on the whole state
6 of Mississippi, and we're proud of her for
7 that.

8 But we've just seen a Hinds County judge
9 and the supreme court rule against education
10 twice, so the notion that it's going to be
11 some out of control system to commandeer our
12 three branches of government is just not true.

13 The second thing they're not telling you
14 is before it gets to a judge, 42 has to pass;
15 then the legislature has to break the law
16 again; and then it goes back to the court
17 system. So, you know, this notion that it's
18 going to be hijacked is just not true.

19 The other point I just wanted to make is
20 it's about economic development. Companies
21 like Toyota, Grammer Industries, Cooper Tire,
22 as a state and a city, we'll spend millions
23 and millions of dollars. We'll go into debt
24 to get them here. But, folks, they're not
25 coming without a strong work force. They're

1 not coming without a strong system of public
2 education.

3 Before Toyota came to north Mississippi,
4 they went to the Tupelo Public School
5 District. So if we don't make that investment
6 in public education, we are not going to be
7 successful in our efforts to grow our economy
8 for economic development.

9 So it doesn't matter if we're willing to
10 spend a billion dollars to get Toyota here; if
11 we don't have the educated work force that
12 they're looking for, they're not coming. So
13 it's an economic issue; it's an economic
14 development issue; it's a quality of life
15 issue. As Mr. Reed said, it is the strongest
16 weapon we have against poverty in the state of
17 Mississippi.

18 We are doing our children a disservice.
19 We're doing ourselves a disservice. And I
20 hope that the folks in this room will join me
21 in being fed up with 50th and vote for Prop
22 42. Let's do this for our city, for our
23 economy, and for a better Mississippi.

24 I see a lot of my teachers here. I
25 certainly wouldn't be here without them.

1 Thank you for being here, thank you for making
2 a difference in the state of Mississippi, and
3 thank you to everyone for supporting
4 education -- public education -- in the state
5 of Mississippi.

6 Thank you, Mayor.

7 *MR. MARTIN:* Next up is Dr. Ed
8 Holliday of Tupelo. He is here to speak in
9 opposition to Initiative 42.

10 *DR. HOLLIDAY:* Thank you. I was going
11 to say thank you to Secretary Hosemann, but
12 he's not here, so relay that to him.

13 This is part of democracy. We can all
14 come here. Some of you know me; some of you
15 don't. My name is Ed Holliday. My mom and
16 dad were in education for decades. I think
17 they started about 1950. And my dad -- I'm
18 not here to contradict anything that's been
19 said about the need for money in Mississippi
20 for education. I remember my dad, I mean,
21 coming home from school. You know, he would
22 come home with -- you know, he's been the
23 principal. He's had to deal with the teachers
24 and the kids all day. And he would go out and
25 grab the log truck. He'd go out crank up that

1 chainsaw, and he tore those trees down. And I
2 had to throw them on the back of the log truck
3 so we could get our college education.

4 So I know about the lack of money, and I
5 know the need for money. And I see all the
6 frustration here, and I want you to put that
7 frustration together because we do need better
8 education in Mississippi. But Initiative 42
9 is not a magic bullet.

10 And one of the reasons why -- I just go
11 straight to it -- the Constitution, the United
12 States Constitution. When it says in Article
13 IV, Section 4, it says "The United States
14 shall guarantee to every state in this union a
15 republican form of government."

16 And he taught me people have died for
17 the right to vote. And you're going to
18 diminish your right to vote? You're going to
19 say that a judge can decide? You can't go to
20 your elected officials?

21 Reverend Penson, if you get elected and
22 you go down there, you can't do anything. The
23 judge has control of education.

24 And I know people have said, you know,
25 "well, the judge won't control," but that's

1 what the initiative says.

2 Russ Latino -- wherever he is -- Russ
3 was saying "we can't control the judge. You
4 can't control the judge." And you're opening
5 up a can of worms.

6 I'm just saying we have seen in the past
7 how government has worked, how judges have
8 worked. Learn from your experience.

9 I am for public education. We need it.
10 But Initiative 42 is giving the judge
11 unprecedented power. It's something that
12 we're not prepared for, to understand what a
13 judge can do. A good judge may do some good
14 things. What about a bad judge? But Russ
15 Latino pointed out in very good terms it's
16 what the words say in the Constitution.

17 And I'm not here to do anything. I know
18 so many of you. And you love me and I love
19 you. That's part of democracy. But don't
20 diminish your voting rights. You can vote for
21 your representative. And, you know, there's a
22 phrase and I will say it. Don't change the
23 Constitution; change your lawmakers. That's
24 your right. But don't diminish the power of
25 the United States Constitution and the

1 Constitution of the state of Mississippi.

2 *MR. MARTIN:* Joe Grist. Mr. Grist is
3 here from Tupelo to speak in favor of
4 Initiative 42.

5 *MR. GRIST:* I'm going to be real
6 brief. My name is Joe Grist, and I am a
7 recovering legislator.

8 In 1997 I voted for MAEP. I was ashamed
9 of it then, and I'm ashamed of it now. I'm
10 going to teach my child to be adequate. I
11 don't know about you, but that is absolutely
12 ridiculous, folks, for us to sit here and try
13 to teach and say that we just want something
14 to be adequate.

15 There's good folks down there in that
16 legislature. I know a lot of them. A lot of
17 them serve you well. And there's a lot of
18 them that would vote to fully fund MAEP every
19 year. They don't get that chance.

20 And he is right. Mr. Holliday is so
21 right. You need to go vote. I mean, you need
22 to send some people home, and you need to send
23 them home now. It is absolutely ridiculous
24 when we have to sit here and beg somebody for
25 money.

1 I don't know about y'all. I was not
2 going to speak here tonight, but about 6:00
3 this morning I got a text from a Tupelo
4 teacher that said if I could have my child at
5 school at 6:55 in the morning that he would
6 give him a review and every student that
7 wanted to show up a review on their math test
8 that they're going to take tomorrow. And the
9 two tests that he's had, he made 96 and 97.
10 Do you think he's going to be there in the
11 morning? You bet your life he's going to be
12 there in the morning.

13 Folks, what's wrong with us now and
14 what's wrong with the state of Mississippi is
15 when good men do nothing -- and good women.
16 It's just a saying. We've got folks down
17 there on both sides. And when good folks do
18 nothing, we're in trouble.

19 He's right. 42 is not the answer to
20 everything. But, folks, you've got to start
21 somewhere.

22 I had a good friend of mine tell me one
23 time, "If you hold somebody down in that
24 ditch, you've got to stay down there with him
25 to hold him."

1 I'm telling you, folks, if we all get
2 better, if we all make more money, the rich
3 will still get richer. They don't have to
4 worry about 42. They're going to still have
5 plenty of money if we all come together. And
6 that's the thing that we have to do now.

7 I'm amazed at the folks that -- I loved
8 it when he said we got a constitutional
9 amendment for women the right to vote and
10 against slavery. You tell me we don't need an
11 constitutional amendment for our children?

12 It's absolutely ridiculous for us to
13 keep on and on and on and begging somebody
14 when we can pass this and get past it. Folks,
15 they have districts all over this. You know
16 how many we had vote at our election? Ask the
17 gentleman here. Thirty percent. We voted on
18 sheriffs, supervisors -- I mean, every single
19 person that's going to represent you. Only
20 30 percent came out to vote. There's 70
21 percent out there not voting. We ought to be
22 ashamed of that. That's something to be
23 ashamed of. And we have people working harder
24 and harder to keep us from being able to vote.

25 This is your chance. Go out there and

1 support 42 because we need something for our
2 children.

3 I am 58 years old and I have a
4 10-year-old and a 12-year-old. My wife loves
5 for me to say that. Both of them in Tupelo
6 Public Schools. And we are so proud of our
7 teachers, and we are so proud of the people
8 that educate our children every day.

9 You know, we have seen all these folks
10 they talk about. I read something today, that
11 "This is going to be donkeys against
12 elephants." Is that not the craziest thing
13 you've ever heard?

14 Ninety percent of the children in this
15 state go to public school; 90 percent. I'm
16 going to bet some of their parents are
17 Republicans; I'm going to bet some of them are
18 Democrats; I'm going to bet some of them are
19 Independents, whatever they are.

20 Folks, it's time that we stood up for
21 this state; it's time we stood up for our
22 children; and it's time we sent a message to
23 the people of Jackson that says, "we want our
24 public schools funded."

25 If you get -- you know, they talk about

1 all this stuff, voucher systems and all this
2 stuff, and you don't tell me there's people
3 out there that would destroy public education?
4 You are sorely wrong. There's people out
5 there that would destroy education if they get
6 a chance because they do not want us to have
7 that chance.

8 Folks, this is it. If we don't fund
9 this now, if we don't vote this in, there's
10 going to be -- the legislature's going to be
11 "People don't care about education. Look,
12 they couldn't get their initiative passed."

13 And this gentleman talked about while
14 ago that there was five or six legislators.
15 Mr. Snowden said he wrote that 42A overnight.
16 I'm sure he put a lot of thought into that.

17 Folks, it's time. Stand up and support
18 these folks. Support your teachers; support
19 your children. Do what's right. Vote for 42.
20 Send a message.

21 *MR. MARTIN:* Senator Hob Bryan from
22 Senate District 6, Amory, Mississippi, to
23 speak in favor of Initiative 42.

24 *SENATOR BRYAN:* Actually, I'm from
25 Senate District 7. We're not in Senate

1 District 7 right now, but it's mighty hard
2 to get here if you didn't pass through
3 Senate District 7.

4 Senator Greg Faries and I are the two
5 authors of the legislation that established
6 the Adequate Education Act.

7 I want to talk to you about
8 St. Patrick's Day. Before the legislature
9 convenes, the leadership prepares a budget.
10 The Republican leadership prepared a budget
11 for this year's legislative session which cut
12 the universities, cut community colleges, and
13 didn't even put enough funding in the adequate
14 education program to pay for the pay raise
15 that was taking effect.

16 When that took place, the Democrats got
17 together and proposed an alternative budget
18 which would increase funding to community
19 colleges, increase funding to universities,
20 and would put us on the path to fully fund the
21 adequate education program in three years,
22 with corresponding increases for universities
23 and for community colleges. It also provided
24 for \$1,000 a year pay raise for state
25 employees -- including highway patrolmen, I'm

1 proud to say. We did it all within the
2 available funds, and we did it without any
3 sort of tax increase. And I ran into a fellow
4 in the hall from the other chamber on the
5 other side who said he looked at the budget
6 and said we could do that if that's what we
7 wanted to do.

8 So as the legislative session worked on
9 and on, the legislation appropriations worked
10 their way through the process, and it got to
11 be St. Patrick's Day. And although there was
12 some additional money for public education,
13 they were \$25 million short of what we needed
14 for the three-year proposal for the MAEP. So
15 I offered an amendment on the Senate floor to
16 add 25 million. And, oh, there was weeping
17 and wailing and gnashing of teeth; that we
18 didn't have the money for it and we would have
19 to take money away from everywhere else. It
20 would just be a terrible thing -- a terrible
21 thing -- if we spent this \$25 million we
22 didn't have.

23 So we went to eat lunch. And after
24 lunch we came back, and there were several
25 hundred million dollars in tax cuts. I asked

1 them where they ate lunch. They didn't have
2 25 million this morning for the school
3 children, but they had hundreds of millions of
4 dollars for tax cuts.

5 After that the House voted to completely
6 abolish the state income tax. And with all
7 those tax cuts, nobody went over and got the
8 legislative budget committee to show us a list
9 of all the people that are going to get cut.
10 Nobody went out and had all this terrible
11 impact on the state budget from the tax cuts.
12 That only happens when you're trying to heal a
13 sick person or educate a child. Then suddenly
14 we're broke.

15 Among the tax cuts that are actually in
16 law that passed the past four years were tax
17 breaks to help give an incentive to put
18 shopping centers in Rankin County, Madison
19 County, the Gulf Coast, and DeSoto County.
20 You couldn't keep shopping centers out of
21 there if you tried to. They put a shopping
22 center in Rankin County that was under
23 construction, \$24 million to complete the
24 construction.

25 They voted to reimburse businesses for

1 their inventory tax. What that means is
2 they're taking your tax money and turning
3 around and writing Walmart a check to
4 reimburse Walmart for inventory tax.
5 Ultimately that will cost 180-something
6 million dollars a year.

7 I'm telling you that what's happening
8 down there is that with the attempt to fund
9 the adequate education program, almost every
10 Democrat voted yes and almost every Republican
11 voted no. The reason we don't have the tax
12 cuts that they tried to pass to completely gut
13 the budget for years to come is because the
14 Democrats voted no. And when it came time for
15 the alternative, almost every Democrat voted
16 against the alternative, and almost every
17 Republican legislator voted for it. Now, this
18 is what's going on.

19 I don't believe the Republican members
20 of the legislature are voting the way most
21 people in Mississippi who consider themselves
22 Republicans want them to vote. And I know for
23 a fact they are not voting the way most people
24 in northeast Mississippi who consider
25 themselves Republicans want them to vote. And

1 the sad thing is a huge percentage of them
2 aren't even voting the way they want to vote.

3 But what's happened is there is so much
4 money, it's a national movement, and it's
5 taken the form of Empower Mississippi on the
6 state level. There is so much money behind
7 establishing for-profit education,
8 establishing vouchers, and taking money away
9 from the public schools to do that with that
10 there are members of the legislature who
11 cannot and will not vote their conscience
12 because they're afraid of the big money
13 people, and that's wrong.

14 It is both necessary and sufficient if
15 you want to fund public education to send
16 legislators to Jackson who will hold up their
17 little hands and vote to fund public education
18 and not stop voting to fund public education
19 and stay there until it gets done.

20 Thank you very much.

21 *MR. MARTIN:* James Malone of
22 Nettleton. He's speaking in favor of
23 Initiative 42.

24 *MR. MALONE:* To start with, that
25 little card they just gave me said I

1 couldn't be inflammatory.

2 You know, I've been in this business
3 starting 41 years, and as passionate as I am
4 about education and I'm going to be down here
5 and not be inflammatory? But there are three
6 people I do not want to be inflammatory to --
7 these two over here holding the guns -- and
8 [inaudible]. I don't want to mess with him
9 either.

10 what I want to talk a little bit about
11 to start with is all I've heard tonight from
12 the againers is just "Vote your senator out;
13 vote your senator out." Senator Bryan is my
14 senator. He's the one down there supporting
15 us. What am I supposed to do? You know,
16 maybe I should be against constitutional
17 amendments. They just passed, as they said
18 earlier, about voter ID. Don't you tell
19 Delbert Hosemann what I'm saying here.

20 Otherwise, in Monroe County we might get us
21 2,000 voters to go over to your county and
22 vote your senator out. What's going on here?

23 And, you know, we get so much support in
24 education. Always have. Like I said, this is
25 41 years. So I go back further than most of

1 you. They thought so much of education, the
2 first program we had -- or the program I
3 remember, Senator Bryan -- was the minimum
4 foundation program. You know, let's give the
5 minimum amount to education. Isn't that
6 something? They really think a lot of us,
7 don't they? So now we've moved all the way up
8 to adequate education.

9 I promised I would make this statement.
10 I got to looking on the Merriam-Webster while
11 ago hearing one of the againsters speak.
12 "Adequate: what is lawfully and reasonably
13 sufficient." How about that? That's in
14 Merriam-Webster, "what is lawfully and
15 reasonably sufficient." So I guess the way
16 they're funding us -- and I've always called
17 this -- you know, we had to rename common core
18 because that upset so many people, so we
19 changed it to "college and career readiness."
20 That really took care of things, didn't it?
21 Now we're all right. Everything is smooth
22 now.

23 So I want to rename the -- you know,
24 it's so much confusion in the public because
25 they didn't understand common core, so we need

1 to change the name. So that took care of it.
2 Nobody's confused anymore.

3 But I think everybody is confused about
4 adequate education. You know, it should be
5 the "Mississippi Inadequate Education Program"
6 because it's never been funded. You know, it
7 says "lawfully and reasonably sufficient," and
8 if they don't fund it, it must be "unlawful
9 and unreasonably insufficient."

10 I was a superintendent at one time, and
11 at the time they said it was the fifth poorest
12 district in the state. We had A and B
13 schools. You can do it. But, you know, it
14 would be nice. In my tenure here I've walked
15 through buildings that you don't want your
16 kids to go into. That's what I do now. I
17 travel across the state and I see buildings --
18 in fact, one of them I walked through -- and I
19 was responsible for these kids. And I walked
20 down through that hall, and I said, "My
21 goodness, I can't send kids into this."

22 Are you waving? I just started. She
23 said I'm out of time, and I thought I was just
24 getting started here. My timer says two
25 minutes. what does yours say? Okay, i guess

1 I'll have to quit.

2 But I did want to say Mr. Latino left.
3 I guess he got a crick in his neck. You know,
4 he was talking about us wanting to agree to
5 disagree. But every time somebody was for the
6 proposal, he was shaking his head so much, I
7 guess he got a crick in it.

8 The lady that talked about the
9 initiative being funded with \$2 million out of
10 state, I didn't know that. Did anybody? I
11 didn't. But she was surprised. I mean, where
12 else are you going to get money to fund
13 anything?

14 One more point. I know y'all are ready
15 to go home and eat supper. I didn't know
16 until tonight 42A, I didn't know what it stood
17 for. I thought it stood for 42 awful.

18 *MR. MARTIN:* It's hard to follow that.

19 Emily Knight. Emily, we've been waiting
20 to hear from you all night long. You're not
21 Emily Knight? She's gone? She gave up on her
22 chance.

23 That concludes tonight's town hall
24 meeting. Let me make two quick personal
25 privileges. The first one is the lady that's

1 been keeping the time down here, she is
2 Assistant Secretary of State with our office.
3 Her name is Lea Anne Brandon. Lea Anne has
4 spent hours today assembling all of this that
5 you see behind us on the stage. She will do
6 this about five more times, including Thursday
7 night in Meridian. So if your travel plans
8 take you to Meridian, you can do this all over
9 again.

10 On behalf of Secretary Hosemann and our
11 entire office, we appreciate your attendance
12 tonight and your participation. We encourage
13 you in November, whether you are for or
14 against these amendments and initiatives, to
15 get out and vote in that election.

16 Thank you all so much. Good night.

17 (PROCEEDINGS CONCLUDED AT 8:00 P.M.)

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CERTIFICATE OF COURT REPORTER

I, *SHARRON F. ALLEN*, Certified Shorthand Reporter and Notary Public in and for the State of Mississippi at large, hereby certify that the foregoing 115 pages contain a full, true, and correct transcript of the proceedings as taken by me at the time and place heretofore stated in the aforementioned matter by stenotype and later reduced to typewritten form by me to the best of my skill and ability by means of computer-aided transcription.

I further certify that I am not in the employ of or related to any counsel or party in this matter and have no interest, monetary or otherwise, as to the final outcome of this proceeding.

WITNESS MY SIGNATURE AND SEAL, this the 23rd day of September, 2015.

Sharron F. Allen, CSR, RPR
SHARRON F. ALLEN, CSR, RPR
CSR NO. 1144

My Commission Expires:

November 5, 2015