

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

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*TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC HEARING*

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The Gale Center  
2601 Elm Street  
Hernando, Mississippi 38632  
On Tuesday, August 13, 2015  
at 5:30 p.m.

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



1 say, "what is 42? what's 42 alternate? I'm  
2 so confused."

3 I said, "Come to the meeting. That's  
4 why we're having this, so people can know what  
5 they're voting on."

6 We know in DeSoto County how important  
7 education is. I bet there's a lot of you out  
8 here who are just like me, whose parents moved  
9 you here because of the public education. In  
10 1973 I was living in Memphis, and my parents  
11 moved us right across the state line because  
12 DeSoto County had great free public education.

13 We all know DeSoto County is booming.  
14 It's doing great. Hernando has its good  
15 points; Olive Branch has good points; so does  
16 Southaven, Walls, and Horn Lake. But none of  
17 those things would be happening without that  
18 base of a good public education.

19 So we can all stand up here and thump  
20 our chests and say how great our cities are,  
21 but we have to always acknowledge that people  
22 would not come here to our cities if we did  
23 not have good public education.

24 So I appreciate all of y'all being here  
25 and taking this issue so seriously. Make sure

1 as you debate we respect each other. I'm sure  
2 Delbert will lay out some rules for that. But  
3 it's good to see, and I want the whole world  
4 to see how seriously we take public education  
5 in DeSoto County.

6 Thank y'all.

7 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you, Mayor.

8 We have two important people here.  
9 Where is Sluggo Davis?

10 *MR. DAVIS:* Right here, sir.

11 *MR. HOSEMANN:* There he is right  
12 there.

13 *MR. DAVIS:* But I'm not important.

14 *MR. HOSEMANN:* You're more important  
15 now. You're retired and everything. So  
16 welcome, Sluggo. It's good to see you  
17 again. And your son sends his regards.

18 I've had enough sense to hire two chiefs  
19 of staff from Hernando [as said] County --  
20 Dianne Hawks and of course Senator Davis.

21 So today we're going to start the 2015  
22 initiative public hearings. I believe Milton  
23 Kuykendall is here. Milton is the  
24 superintendent of education. He's right here.

25 I want to go over briefly what we're

1 doing today and the reasons that we got here.

2 My name is Delbert Hosemann. I'm  
3 Secretary of State for the state of  
4 Mississippi, and have served as such for eight  
5 years.

6 These public hearings are a historical  
7 event in Mississippi. We have never had  
8 competing amendments. And I have placed both  
9 of them on each side of the screen so you can  
10 see them. In our history since 1817, we've  
11 not had this. Before now -- you'll see these  
12 are Initiative 42, so we've had several  
13 initiatives proposed in the past, many of  
14 which did not make the ballot. Four of them  
15 did. Two of those were defeated, and two were  
16 passed. Term limits failed on the  
17 constitutional ballot, as did personhood. Two  
18 passed -- imminent domain and voter ID, which  
19 has now been implemented and which all of you  
20 showed when you cast your ballot this past  
21 time. And hopefully all of you voted then and  
22 will vote again.

23 As part of that process, the Secretary  
24 of State is required to hold public hearings  
25 in five different locations in the state of

1 Mississippi. We are holding eight of these  
2 particular ones. Education is of course a  
3 critical component. Over half of the state's  
4 budget is spent on education.

5 Tonight the format is as such: we'll  
6 ask each initiative measure, beginning with 42  
7 and then 42A. They will be addressed by  
8 Ms. Nordstrom here to begin as 42, and then  
9 Mr. Latino for 42A. We will then have the  
10 opposed two positions provided by each of  
11 them.

12 After that particular provision, we will  
13 start what is called -- what I call the public  
14 forum. There wasn't really a recipe on how to  
15 do this when we did the three the last two  
16 years ago. But I thought it was important for  
17 everyone to have an opportunity to speak.  
18 Therefore, we will speak after the for and  
19 against, and you will be available to speak  
20 here.

21 We transcribe every word that is said  
22 here tonight, and those words will be on our  
23 website for the citizens who had to work and  
24 couldn't be here. We want to give them an  
25 opportunity to see what you said. So don't

1 say anything you don't want in print. Don't  
2 get up here and say anything you don't want  
3 anybody else to read. So we'll be doing that.

4 And we want each of you to have the time  
5 to express yourself. We'll give you two to  
6 three minutes to do so. And we will start for  
7 and against, anybody that wants to speak, and  
8 we will go until -- I will stay until the last  
9 person who wants to speak has spoken. I think  
10 that's important.

11 Now, as we go forward, we're going to  
12 ask first -- I know everybody says this, but  
13 please check your cell phones. We would ask  
14 that you please silence those so that the  
15 speakers will have the opportunity and won't  
16 be interrupted when they're speaking here.

17 And we'll also ask you to please take  
18 just a moment. We want to pledge allegiance  
19 to the flag. So if everyone will rise,  
20 please.

21 (PLEDGE)

22 *MR. HOSEMANN:* So we'll start the  
23 constitutional discussion of Mississippi.  
24 This will be the only one on the ballot this  
25 year. We do have pamphlets. And Lea Anne

1 has done this, who's in the back there. She  
2 does a great job. Let me get one. There's  
3 one on constitutional initiatives here that  
4 the Secretary of State published. I  
5 encourage you to get one. It's also on our  
6 website if you just want to download it and  
7 read any specific provision. It goes over  
8 how this works and how it's calculated and  
9 how your vote will be calculated.

10 when this comes on the ballot in  
11 November, you will have the opportunity to  
12 vote for or against any amendment. And if you  
13 vote for amendment, you will have a choice  
14 between the two amendments we're going to  
15 discuss now. There's also a pamphlet on this  
16 specific amendment that's available in the  
17 back, and I encourage you to take those or go  
18 online and see them online as well.

19 So we will start with Ms. Nordstrom, who  
20 is from Oxford, Mississippi, and she rises in  
21 support of the constitutional amendment  
22 No. 42.

23 *MS. NORDSTROM:* Good evening. My name  
24 is Merrill Nordstrom, and I was born and  
25 raised in Oxford. My husband teaches at Ole



1 Miss. And we are the proud parents of three  
2 Oxford schools children -- Eli, age ten;  
3 will, age eight; and Kate, age seven. So  
4 needless to say, my husband and I are very  
5 vested in the future and the success of the  
6 public schools in Mississippi.

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

19 I stand here as a product of Mississippi  
20 public schools. My mother, Vickie King,  
21 taught seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-grade  
22 English for 14 years in the Mississippi public  
23 schools. I remember her staying up late in  
24 the night grading papers, papers on *A Tale of*  
25 *Two Cities*, on *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Treasure*

1           *Island.*

2           So what is MAEP? MAEP stands for the  
3           Mississippi Adequate Education Program. It is  
4           a law passed in 1997 by the state legislature.  
5           The purpose of MAEP is to ensure that our  
6           schools are adequately funded so that all  
7           children will get a decent education.

8           Since 1997 lawmakers have broken their  
9           own law and severely underfunded every single  
10          school in Mississippi. Because of their  
11          broken promises, our schools face problems  
12          like unsafe buildings, lack of up-to-date  
13          computers, technology, and lab equipment, lack  
14          of textbooks, large class sizes, and unsafe  
15          buses.

16          In one school district facilities are in  
17          such need of repair that teachers have to put  
18          down wooden pallets in the hallways so  
19          children can get to class when it rains. In  
20          another county the superintendent pays money  
21          out of his own pocket to supplement teacher  
22          salaries. And here in DeSoto County, schools  
23          have been shortchanged 104 million by state  
24          lawmakers since 2008. That's enough money for  
25          302 new teachers for ten years. Let me repeat

1 that. Enough money for 302 teachers for ten  
2 years.

3 The results are clear. Local school  
4 districts have been shortchanged. Local  
5 property taxes have gone up. Too many schools  
6 have too few teachers, outdated textbooks,  
7 antiquated facilities, unsafe buses, and a  
8 lack of computers.

9 The underfunding of schools hurts our  
10 state's ability to attract companies to move  
11 here. Our students are not learning the  
12 skills companies are looking for. And the  
13 results hurt our ability to grow and attract  
14 good-paying jobs.

15 I've heard certain lawmakers and critics  
16 of 42 refer to our public schools as abysmal  
17 failures. Apparently these lawmakers did not  
18 learn in school the concept of cause and  
19 effect.

20 It is stories like these in schools all  
21 across our state that harm our kids, that sell  
22 us short, that scare companies and businesses  
23 away from doing business in Mississippi, that  
24 cost us jobs.

25 It is our moral obligation, and it is

1 incumbent upon us as Mississippians to demand  
2 from our elected officials that they do better  
3 for our children. We can do better. We can  
4 have better schools, better jobs, and a better  
5 future for our children and our state.

6 So what is Initiative 42? Initiative 42  
7 is a constitutional amendment that will  
8 require lawmakers to adequately fund  
9 Mississippi's public schools as they promised  
10 back in 1997.

11 Lawmakers will tell you it means that  
12 one judge in Hinds County or Forrest County or  
13 one judge in some county will decide how much  
14 money our schools will get. That is simply  
15 not true. All a judge will do is ensure that  
16 lawmakers are spending the money on education  
17 as required under the law, the very law that  
18 they themselves enacted. Lawmakers will tell  
19 you that this is simply a tax or will tell you  
20 that if 42 passes, it will require the state  
21 to cut budgets in other departments. That is  
22 not true either.

23 The Better Schools Better Jobs petition  
24 that nearly 200,000 Mississippians signed  
25 provided a roadmap for fully funding

1 Mississippi's public schools without cuts or  
2 tax increases. In fact, the petition clearly  
3 states a quarter of the way down the  
4 following: "Funding the initiative will not  
5 require a reduction in, elimination of, or  
6 reallocation of funding from any currently  
7 funded programs."

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

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

1           theirs."

2                   We are at a crucial moment when we must  
3           reclaim the promise of public education. In  
4           November you can decide whether to increase  
5           funding for our schools or allow state  
6           lawmakers to continue to underfund our  
7           schools.

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

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

1 Thank you.

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

4 We now have Russ Latino speaking on  
5 behalf of Amendment 42A.

6 *MR. LATINO:* For clarity, on behalf of  
7 42A or against 42?

8 *MR. HOSEMANN:* For.

9 *MR. LATINO:* For 42A. Okay. This is  
10 different than the way we did it last  
11 go-round.

12 My name is Russ Latino. I'm a  
13 recovering litigator, attorney. I did it for  
14 ten years. Had enough of it. I decided to go  
15 and do something else in the political  
16 advocacy world. About a month ago I started,  
17 with a group of friends, an organization  
18 called Kids First in Mississippi, an  
19 organization that's dedicated to trying to get  
20 people to think differently about the way that  
21 we do education and speaking on important  
22 issues like the issue that's on the ballot  
23 this November. I say that, but I really don't  
24 care about the name of the organization or the  
25 title.





1           that there are a lot of passionate people that  
2           want to do better for Mississippi." I admire  
3           that. But this is not the vehicle to get us  
4           there. And that's the camp that I fall in,  
5           candidly, and that's why I'm here tonight.

6           Look, when I was at Tulane in New  
7           Orleans, I tutored kids from C.J. Peete and  
8           Magnolia Projects, some of the worst of worst  
9           neighborhoods you can be in. And I saw kids  
10          who were in the third grade who literally  
11          could not spell the word "cat." I've seen  
12          failed schools. I understand the agony of  
13          that. I really do. But that doesn't mean  
14          that 42 is the answer for this.

15          I think there are lots of things that we  
16          can agree on in this room. I think everyone  
17          in this room can agree that educational  
18          outcome should not be dictated by ZIP Code, by  
19          race, by gender, by how much money is in your  
20          parents' bank account. We can all agree on  
21          that. And that's a good starting place. We  
22          can agree that there are plenty of phenomenal  
23          teachers and administrators in Mississippi.  
24          That's something we all agree on.

25                 we can point to examples of wasteful

1 spending that are done at the state level. We  
2 can all agree that that happens. Nobody's  
3 disputing that that happens. I think if we  
4 were honest with ourselves, we could also look  
5 at spending in school districts and find  
6 instances of wasteful spending as well.

7 Everyone can agree that 50th or 48th or  
8 whatever it is we really are based on whatever  
9 publication you're reading is not good enough.  
10 I love Mississippi. I was educated here,  
11 married here, have invested my life here; my  
12 kids are here. Lord willing, I will die here.  
13 I love our people and I love our culture.  
14 But, like you, I do not want my two children  
15 who will attend public school when they get of  
16 age to grow up being the butt of late night  
17 talk show host jokes. I just don't. So we  
18 all are on the same page there.

19 The question is whether or not 42 moves  
20 us forward; and, if so, at what cost? And  
21 when I say "at what cost," people  
22 automatically say, "Okay. Well, this guy is  
23 now talking about dollars. He's trying to  
24 hold back dollars." I'm not just talking  
25 about dollars. At what cost to parents? At

1           what cost to teachers? At what cost to  
2           superintendents in terms of having a voice?  
3           At what cost to the legislature? Does it have  
4           the flexibility to actually address unforeseen  
5           circumstances? We're talking about a  
6           seven-year phase-in and a document that's not  
7           even part of the constitutional amendment and  
8           being asked to rely upon that based upon an  
9           economic projection of what will happen over  
10          the next seven years. What happens if 2008 or  
11          2009 hits again? Where are we then? There  
12          are a lot of people in this room -- how many  
13          of you are educators in this room? Most of  
14          the room. Right? And I'm sure you all came  
15          in thinking, "Gosh, I really want to hear that  
16          anti-42 guy."

17                 Your retirement right now is funded at  
18                 under 60 percent. And it's funded at under  
19                 60 percent not because there's not a high  
20                 contribution level. If you look at the  
21                 contribution level that you're paying out of  
22                 your check and what the state is paying, it's  
23                 substantially, exponentially more than what  
24                 people in the private sector are putting in  
25                 their retirement accounts. It's that way

1 because we relied upon faulty economic  
2 projections. And so we're talking about we're  
3 eventually going to get to the point that  
4 we're going to fully fund MAEP in seven years,  
5 but it relies upon our economy rocking and  
6 rolling, and that might not happen.

7 And the other thing: we're looking at  
8 MAEP and saying, "well, okay, let's make this  
9 part of the Constitution." Even though the  
10 amendment doesn't say that -- it doesn't. But  
11 assuming that a court were to look at the  
12 amendment and say, "I'm going to read into  
13 this amendment, MAEP, let's make it a part of  
14 the Constitution," is that really a good  
15 thing?

16 I know for people who look at schools  
17 and say schools are underfunded, it may sound  
18 like a good thing; but we're talking about a  
19 formula that has some flaws in, it candidly,  
20 and we're talking about a formula that in ten  
21 years might be outdated. We're binding future  
22 legislators; we're binding future parents;  
23 we're binding future children to a formula  
24 that may not meet our needs in the future. It  
25 may not be in the best interest of our

1 students. And those are things that we've got  
2 to consider.

3 Most of the people in this room were  
4 sold on 42 as a vehicle for increased funding.  
5 Right? I know. I was at Neshoba. Right?  
6 And somebody walks up and says, "would you  
7 like to increase funding for our schools  
8 without increasing taxes?" well, gee golly,  
9 that sounds great. who would say no to that?  
10 But the realty is the amendment that is  
11 proposed in 42 is not simply about funding.  
12 It's not. And I don't want you to take my  
13 word for it. I want you to look at it. Look  
14 at it with me right now. They're on the  
15 screens over here.

16 Section 42A. Find the word "funding" in  
17 it -- or 42. Find me the word "funding." Is  
18 it there? It's not there. And that is the  
19 only part of this whole thing that actually  
20 becomes a part of the Constitution.

21 Let's talk about what else is not there.  
22 The Mississippi Constitution right now, in  
23 section 201, gives the legislature the  
24 ability, by general law, to pass education  
25 laws, to set conditions and limitations.

1           If you look at the amendment up here  
2           that we see, the word "legislature" has been  
3           completely removed. Now, Ms. Nordstrom said  
4           that the court will just be there to make sure  
5           the legislature does the right thing. I want  
6           you to know the word "legislature" is no  
7           longer in the provision of the Constitution  
8           that deals with education. And every other  
9           time the legislature is given power in the  
10          Constitution, it says "by general law." We  
11          are removing the legislature's ability to  
12          impact education policy. That's way more than  
13          just talking about increasing funding.

14                 And what are we doing in addition to it?  
15          well, we added a couple of words "adequate"  
16          and "efficient." well, those sound good.  
17          Right? what do they mean? we're going to  
18          rely on a judge -- giving him new power or her  
19          new power -- to determine what those words  
20          mean. And that judge, if it's a suit against  
21          the state, will be in Jackson. That's just  
22          the way our venue statutes work. It will be  
23          in Jackson. So that person then gets the  
24          incredible power to determine what is adequate  
25          and efficient.

1           And I know what the proponents say in  
2           response to this argument, which is "You're  
3           not considering the initiative proposal."  
4           Remember that document that the original  
5           proponents of this amendment put together.

6           why didn't the people who wrote the  
7           amendment, the only part that becomes a part  
8           of the Constitution, just say, "We're going to  
9           establish increased funding in the amendment"?  
10          They could have said "MAEP, as currently  
11          configured, shall be funded, subject to the  
12          authority of the court." It could have been  
13          in the amendment. They didn't put it there.  
14          why? why did they gut the legislature? why  
15          did they add the court? These are the kinds  
16          of questions that you should be asking  
17          yourself. These are legitimate questions,  
18          regardless of how you come down on the funding  
19          question. Okay?

20          what is ultimately going to happen here  
21          is that a court is going to -- a lawsuit is  
22          going to get filed, and a court is going to  
23          have a chance to say whether or not something  
24          is adequate and efficient. That's what's  
25          going to happen. And they may rely on the

1 initiative proposal. They may look at it and  
2 say, "well, let's see what Mr. Munford was  
3 thinking when he wrote the amendment." They  
4 may do that. I don't think they're bound to  
5 do that. I'm not aware of any case law that  
6 would say that they're bound to do that. And  
7 even if they consider it, that would be just  
8 one factor that they would look at.

9 But let's say best-case scenario --  
10 best-case scenario -- a court looks at it and  
11 says, "We're going to do what the initiative  
12 proposal says, even though it's not a part of  
13 the constitutional amendment." That's the  
14 best-case scenario for the proponent side.  
15 How do we define adequate and efficient in the  
16 initiative proposal? well, yes, it references  
17 MAEP in defining adequate. It does. But it  
18 says that is a minimal standard, meaning that  
19 the judge that ultimately has the power to  
20 make that decision can look at it and decide  
21 "There are other things that I think are  
22 necessary in order to be considered adequate."  
23 They can just add things. They have that  
24 discretion and that power if you apply the  
25 best-case scenario.



1                   Or the word "efficient." The word  
2                   "efficient" in the proposal is defined  
3                   something like this: That the judge is  
4                   enabled to basically enact policy that makes  
5                   us favorably competitive with surrounding  
6                   states. Well, we all want to be favorably  
7                   competitive with surrounding states. Right?  
8                   Nobody would say that's a bad idea. But  
9                   you're asking an individual judge in Jackson  
10                  to determine what we need to do in order to  
11                  become favorably competitive and to set that  
12                  standard.

13                  And what does that mean in practice? In  
14                  practice, that can mean a lot of things. That  
15                  can mean that all the judge does is fund MAEP.  
16                  That could be one option. The judge can come  
17                  back and say, "I don't think MAEP is good  
18                  enough. Here's an extra million dollars. Oh,  
19                  by the way, State, I hope you can figure out  
20                  how to come up with it." Cut programs, raise  
21                  taxes. Okay.

22                  They can say, "Look, we don't think the  
23                  curriculum is adequate and efficient, so we're  
24                  going to set common core as the standard for  
25                  the state of Mississippi," or, "We're going to

1 consolidated school district because we think  
2 what is adequate and efficient is the  
3 consolidation of school districts." Or we're  
4 going to get rid of decades' worth of  
5 education policy not just passed by the  
6 legislature, but passed by your  
7 superintendents and your school board and take  
8 control away from parents.

9 I'm not saying those things will happen.  
10 I'm saying that this amendment gives a  
11 chancery court judge the ability to make those  
12 things happen. And if you're a parent or a  
13 teacher or an administrator or a  
14 businessperson who's trying to grow the  
15 economy and add jobs, that uncertainty should  
16 scare the dickens out of you.

17 If what they wanted to do was increase  
18 funding, they could have said so, and it would  
19 have been an incredibly straightforward  
20 debate. They didn't do it. And I want you to  
21 ask yourself the question "why?" we all want  
22 better schools. we all want the next  
23 generation to be better off than the last  
24 generation. That does not mean adopting a bad  
25 idea solely because we are frustrated with the

1 progress that we're making as a state.  
2 Instead, we should come together where there's  
3 common ground and find better solutions for  
4 better schools and better jobs.

5 Thank you.

6 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you, Mr. Latino.

7 We are going to go into the debate on  
8 the negative side of these and give each an  
9 opportunity.

10 We have kind of breaking news here. I  
11 often look at some of those things. They say,  
12 "Breaking News," you know, "Cat Bites Dog," or  
13 something. That's not really breaking,  
14 particularly if it comes from Chris Matthews.

15 But in any event this one says  
16 "Mississippi Supreme Court ruled Thursday that  
17 Hinds County Circuit Court Judge Winston Kidd  
18 did not have the authority to rewrite the  
19 ballot title for legislative alternative to  
20 Initiative 42."

21 To give y'all some history about that,  
22 the way this works: It's filed with us, the  
23 signatures filed with us. We give it to the  
24 attorney general of Mississippi, who is Jim  
25 Hood, and Mr. Hood writes the ballot title.

1 You'll see in your pamphlets there's no ballot  
2 title. After a ballot title was determined by  
3 the legislature, there was litigation filed  
4 from Oxford -- a lady in Oxford -- and it went  
5 to the Mississippi Supreme Court.

6 The original language which said on the  
7 title, which you'll see on all of our  
8 brochures now that this is finalized -- the  
9 original legislative alternative asked "Should  
10 the legislature provide for the establishment  
11 and support of free public schools without  
12 judicial enforcement?"

13 There was litigation over that, and the  
14 supreme court ruled that the judge who rewrote  
15 that language did not have the authority to do  
16 so, and they went back to Attorney General  
17 Hood's original language. So that is what you  
18 will be seeing. And that was found just, I  
19 guess, sometime late this afternoon or  
20 sometime this afternoon.

21 So, Ms. Nordstrom, if you would rise in  
22 opposition to 42A, please, ma'am.

23 *MS. NORDSTROM:* Before I begin, I want  
24 to respond to a couple of issues -- one that  
25 has been brought up over the course of this

1 debate; one being the historic funding of  
2 public education by the State Legislature.  
3 I know that Mr. Latino did not talk about  
4 that, but that has been brought up in  
5 previous debates and through the news.

6 They can throw out -- the legislature,  
7 the lawmakers can throw out as many figures as  
8 they want to, but I will not let them confuse  
9 you, because these are the facts: This year K  
10 through 12 funding is 3.5 million less than it  
11 was in 2008. K through 12's share of the  
12 state budget has been reduced in each of the  
13 last three years. K through 12 funding is the  
14 smallest percentage of the state budget in  
15 Mississippi's history. The state budget,  
16 excluding K through 12, has grown by more than  
17 30 percent since 2008. K through 12 funding  
18 has remained stagnant. And the worst part:  
19 Each year the state spends \$18,162 to house  
20 one prison inmate, but only \$5,140 to educate  
21 a child. Does that make sense to you?

22 Ask yourself this question: Are you  
23 satisfied with the schools your children and  
24 your grandchildren attend? If the answer is  
25 no, you need to vote for 42.

1 I do want to respond to an issue that  
2 Mr. Latino brought up about the language in  
3 the Constitution. Mr. Latino is correct. The  
4 seven-year phase-in plan is not in the  
5 Constitution. But there is nowhere in the  
6 Constitution that says that they have to fund  
7 MAEP in one year. We have given them an  
8 option; but if the lawmakers have a better  
9 idea that doesn't require raising taxes or  
10 cutting the state budgets, we are all for it.

11 Ladies and gentlemen, do not be fooled  
12 by the legislative alternative. Never before  
13 in the 198-year history of Mississippi have  
14 lawmakers ever thwarted the people's will by  
15 placing an alternative to an initiative  
16 measure on the general election ballot. It  
17 did not happen until after nearly 200,000  
18 Mississippians signed petitions saying they  
19 wanted a constitutional amendment to force  
20 lawmakers to obey their own law and fully fund  
21 our public schools.

22 42A was placed on the November ballot by  
23 lawmakers for one purpose and one purpose  
24 only: To divide the supporters of public  
25 education so that Initiative 42 will not get

1 the percentage of votes needed to amend our  
2 State Constitution. In other words, it is a  
3 trick, a sleight-of-hand deception. Do not  
4 fall for it.

5 voters will have two choices when they  
6 enter the voting booth on November 3rd. The  
7 first choice is whether to amend the State  
8 Constitution. The Constitution needs to be  
9 amended because it gives lawmakers control  
10 over public school funding with no  
11 accountability. Voters who want that  
12 accountability for full funding of our schools  
13 must vote yes for this constitutional  
14 amendment.

15 The second choice is between Initiative  
16 42 and the legislative alternative, 42A.  
17 Again, voters who want better public schools  
18 should vote for Initiative 42, not 42A. If  
19 you just remember that 42A stands for 42  
20 against, as in against public education.

21 The author of 42A did not put it on the  
22 ballot in the hope that it would pass. He did  
23 it to split the vote so that neither amendment  
24 was adopted. By putting 42A on the ballot,  
25 lawmakers simply thumbed their noses at the

1 Mississippians who signed Petition 42. Don't  
2 be fooled. 42A keeps the status quo. 42A  
3 allows lawmakers to continue to underfund our  
4 schools. 42 [as said] is against adequate  
5 education and adequate funding. 42A says yes  
6 to unsafe buses, yes to leaking roofs, yes to  
7 less training for our teachers. It does  
8 nothing to improve our schools. Only  
9 Initiative 42 will hold lawmakers accountable  
10 to fulfill their promise to make education  
11 funding a priority.

12 Now, lawmakers will tell you some tall  
13 tales. The politicians in Jackson will tell  
14 you that throwing more money at public schools  
15 will not solve our problems. But by not  
16 following its own 1997 law, they've never  
17 given their own plan a chance to succeed.  
18 It's like never putting gas in your car and  
19 then complaining that it won't run.

20 Now, the politicians in Jackson will  
21 tell you that one judge in Hinds County or  
22 Forrest County or some other county will  
23 decide how much money your school district  
24 will get. The fact is that one judge in any  
25 county has never had the final say on anything



1 that one side or the other didn't like. An  
2 example is what happened today. The  
3 nine-member State Supreme Court has always had  
4 the final word. But all of that is irrelevant  
5 if lawmakers would just follow their own 1997  
6 law.

7 Mr. Latino keeps talking about one  
8 judge, one judge, one judge. I don't know  
9 about you, but I'm smart enough to know that  
10 if you don't break the law, you don't have to  
11 go to court.

12 The politicians in Jackson will tell you  
13 that they have to cut state budgets or raise  
14 your state taxes if you force them to follow  
15 their own law. But go look at your local  
16 county tax bill and see how much it's gone up  
17 in the last ten years, all because those same  
18 politicians won't do their job and follow the  
19 law. The money is there for our schools  
20 without a tax increase and without cutting  
21 state budgets.

22 You know, it's a matter of priorities.  
23 The state has the money. In 2010 our  
24 lawmakers invested in a company outside of  
25 Columbus, Mississippi, who told them they

1           could turn wood into gasoline. Crazy. Right?  
2           Our lawmakers gave that company \$75 million.  
3           Now that company has gone bankrupt, and we  
4           will never see that money again -- money that  
5           could have gone to our public schools.

6                       Folks, it's a matter of priorities.  
7           Every single story that politicians in Jackson  
8           will tell you is based on fear, using scare  
9           tactics that have no basis in fact. Ask  
10          yourself why would these lawmakers work so  
11          hard to confuse you about an issue as  
12          important as public education? Maybe it's  
13          because they're scared to death of losing  
14          their control and their power and telling you  
15          how your schools should be run. Sometimes  
16          these politicians get confused about who works  
17          for whom.

18                      On November 3rd you have the chance to  
19          take back control of your schools by voting  
20          for Initiative 42. You have the chance to  
21          tell lawmakers that you won't be fooled by  
22          42A. You have the chance to hold those  
23          politicians accountable for fully funding our  
24          public schools like they promised. And you  
25          have the chance to show the children of

1 Mississippi that there is nothing more  
2 important than education, because better  
3 schools mean better jobs, higher wages, and  
4 more economic growth.

5 So on November 3rd, when you walk into  
6 that voting booth, you say yes to the one true  
7 choice for better schools -- Initiative 42.

8 Thank you.

9 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Mr. Latino is opposed.  
10 He rises opposed. You have ten minutes.

11 *MR. LATINO:* I feel like I'm back in  
12 high school doing, like, a Lincoln/Douglas  
13 debate or something where a person gets up,  
14 then the next person gets up, and we go back  
15 and forth. But this is much more important  
16 than that.

17 I'm not a lawmaker in Jackson. Never  
18 claimed to be one. Not looking to be one.  
19 And I'm not trying to confuse you either. In  
20 fact, if anything, all I'm trying to say is  
21 look at the amendment itself. Right? Read it  
22 for yourself. Show me the funding. Show me  
23 the MAEP.

24 There is a difference between putting  
25 something in front of a judge and asking them

1 to interpret whether or not a law was violated  
2 or to interpret sort of a statutory  
3 interpretation, that sort of thing. There's a  
4 difference between that and deleting the  
5 legislature from the provision of our  
6 Constitution that deals with education and  
7 asking a judge not to sit in judgment, but to  
8 develop policy to determine what is adequate  
9 and efficient. In the 200-and-something years  
10 of Mississippi's history, we've never asked  
11 the judiciary to take on the role of  
12 developing policy.

13 And we sit here and we talk about  
14 accountability, and it's easy to -- look, it's  
15 easy to bash politicians. Right? They do  
16 crazy things. They make me scratch my head  
17 sometimes. It's easy to bash politicians.  
18 But sometimes it's demagoguery too. Okay?  
19 Yes, our elected officials occasionally do  
20 some bad things that make you scratch your  
21 head. I'm not a big fan of KiOR or Twin Creek  
22 or any of that economic development stuff,  
23 candidly. That doesn't mean that we should  
24 take away the legislative function and give it  
25 to a court. It just doesn't mean that's a

1 good idea.

2 You want to talk about accountability.  
3 You've got 174 members of the Mississippi  
4 House of Representatives and the Mississippi  
5 Senate. And they come from your communities.  
6 You get the chance to elect them. You just  
7 had a primary where you had a chance to decide  
8 which direction you want to go on certain  
9 races. Those people, right or wrong, whether  
10 you like the outcome or not, are from your  
11 community. They represent you. Just like  
12 your superintendent is from your community,  
13 just like your school board members are from  
14 your community. That's accountability.  
15 Giving it to a judge, even a judge -- if there  
16 is appellate review in this situation --  
17 giving it to a judge in Jackson, mind you, is  
18 no more accountable than having 174 people  
19 from your communities make those sorts of  
20 decisions. And I would add that that judge in  
21 Jackson is elected, so they're one of those  
22 politicians in Jackson too.

23 The truth is this: I'm not a big fan of  
24 42A. This is kind of an odd debate. Because  
25 if I were to make a suggestion to you, it's

1           that you vote no on the whole dang thing,  
2           period. But I think 42A serves a purpose, and  
3           it's a necessary purpose. And you can call it  
4           a dirty trick if you want to call it a dirty  
5           truck, but let me explain what purpose it  
6           serves.

7           The initiative process in Mississippi is  
8           as clear as mud. It is confusing. If you  
9           look at the Constitution when it comes to the  
10          initiative process, it is confusing. What  
11          goes on the ballot is confusing. Our attorney  
12          general gets to write a summary and a title  
13          instead of actually looking at how we're  
14          amending the Constitution. I mean, the people  
15          should know what it's actually going to say.  
16          Judge Randolph, in a concurring opinion today,  
17          the case Secretary Hosemann talked about,  
18          talked about how messed up this entire process  
19          is, that the one thing that is actually  
20          becoming a part of the Constitution is not put  
21          in front of you. And I'm glad that Secretary  
22          Hosemann is. Because that's what you need to  
23          be looking at, not all this other stuff that  
24          people are trying to describe to you what it  
25          really means.

1                   But here's why I think 42A was good:  
2                   Because without 42A, you may look at 42 and  
3                   think, "well, education is a fundamental  
4                   right. That sounds good. Adequate and  
5                   efficient, that sounds good. We're going to  
6                   have a court to enforce it. I don't know any  
7                   better."

8                   When you've got 42A, it allows you to  
9                   go, "wait a second. Maybe the legislature  
10                  should be involved in this process. Right?  
11                  They have been for 200 years." It presents a  
12                  contrast, and it's a good contrast.

13                  I sat in the forum -- and let me say  
14                  this too: It strikes me as odd that we're  
15                  calling the legislators out for pulling a  
16                  dirty trick when people have been sold on an  
17                  amendment that supposedly funds education that  
18                  doesn't say anything about funding. But I sat  
19                  in the forum in Jackson on Tuesday, and I  
20                  listened to person after person in favor of 42  
21                  got up and talked about how we needed more  
22                  funding in our schools. I listened to  
23                  emotional stories, some of the same stories  
24                  that we've heard tonight about kids without  
25                  crayons, glue sticks, and textbooks; schools

1 with leaky roofs, with pallets on the floor.  
2 If those things are true, those things  
3 absolutely should be addressed. There's no  
4 question about that.

5 But none of the folks that have  
6 responded so far, whether in Jackson or here,  
7 have addressed whether or not the amendment  
8 itself does anything for funding, guarantees  
9 anything for funding. And none of them have  
10 addressed whether it makes sense to give a  
11 judge this kind of authority over our entire  
12 education system. We just keep getting told  
13 over and over again "we've got to fully fund  
14 schools. we've got to fully fund schools."  
15 And maybe you agree with that wholeheartedly,  
16 but it doesn't mean that you should ignore all  
17 of the other implications that could be really  
18 bad for parents and teachers and your kids.  
19 It's a false choice that you've got one or the  
20 other. Either you like 42 or you hate public  
21 schools. That's a false choice.

22 when I hear that, I can only assume one  
23 of two things, and I think one is probably  
24 more accurate than the other: That people are  
25 so frustrated, that they would take a bad idea



1 just to have an idea. And that's -- I get  
2 that. I get that. But that's when you've got  
3 to step back and say, "Let's be thinking about  
4 this. How do we develop better solutions?"

5 Or the second thing is that there are  
6 some people maybe who just don't want a  
7 representative government. They don't like  
8 the makeup of our House and Senate. They  
9 don't like what those people stand for. And  
10 so, for them, they would just rather  
11 circumvent them. That's dangerous, because  
12 there will be a point in time when the  
13 pendulum shifts in Mississippi. And the  
14 question is do you want to be on the opposite  
15 end of that kind of activism.

16 Here's what I know: In 1970 per-pupil  
17 spending in Mississippi was \$457. Adjusted  
18 for inflation, that's 2,841 bucks. Not much.  
19 As of 2012 the statistics that we reported to  
20 the federal government, per-pupil spending in  
21 Mississippi had nearly quadrupled to \$8,361,  
22 with some districts like Tunica drawing well,  
23 well more than that. We were and are in line  
24 with surrounding states, with the exception of  
25 Louisiana. I will say Louisiana funds schools

1 better than the rest of the Southern states.  
2 I'd also say that they're close to being  
3 bankrupt, if that matters for anything. I  
4 note that Alabama and Tennessee that only fund  
5 like \$50 more per student level on one and I  
6 think maybe \$500 more per student level on the  
7 other, that they have substantially higher per  
8 capita incomes than people in Mississippi and  
9 substantially higher revenue as well.

10 Every year since 2012 K through 12  
11 education spending has gone up, with a nearly  
12 \$300 million increase in that time period. In  
13 2016 the legislature will spend \$2.5 billion.  
14 That's the most we've ever spent on education.  
15 The last four years they spent 9.5 billion,  
16 the most we've ever spent in a four-year  
17 period on education. We're spending nearly  
18 40 percent of our entire general fund on  
19 education, which I think means that we at  
20 least get it somewhat. We've quadrupled  
21 spending almost in four years. Fifty-three  
22 percent of our revenue increase from 2015 went  
23 to K-12 education. And in the 2016 budget,  
24 66 percent is slated. So we're talking about  
25 a 25 percent a year phase-in potentially, that

1 they're beating that. They beat it for the  
2 last few years, actually.

3 And I'm not an apologist for the  
4 legislature. Like I said, I mean, we can have  
5 a legitimate debate on what level schools  
6 should be funded at and how to best allocate  
7 funds. But to act as if they are slashing and  
8 burning our education system or that they  
9 haven't put any gas in the tank I think is  
10 disingenuous. I don't think it's fair. I  
11 really don't.

12 You know, at the same time period in the  
13 last four years that we see spending almost  
14 quadrupled, our NAEP scores, if you look at  
15 them, are stagnant across the board. We spent  
16 almost four times as much more money per  
17 student and stagnant scores across the board.  
18 We simultaneously see states like Utah and  
19 Idaho spend thousands less per student --  
20 we're actually not at the bottom of that  
21 metric. We're not. We're not 50th. They  
22 spend thousands less per student. Utah is in  
23 the top ten when it comes to NAEP scores. I'm  
24 not saying we're Utah. I'm not saying we've  
25 got the same situation. I'm really not. What

1 I am saying, though, is to act as if this is  
2 only a dollar problem is almost certainly to  
3 ensure that we never improve. To act as if it  
4 is only a political problem is almost  
5 certainly to ensure that we never improve.

6 I know that there are 75 percent of you  
7 who have dedicated your lives to teaching. I  
8 have no doubt that you are sincere in that  
9 passion. I have no doubt that you have made  
10 an impact on a lot of people's lives. I don't  
11 think you would be here if you were just ho  
12 hum trying to get through the day. I don't.  
13 I think we should be listening to you more  
14 when we develop education policy. I do on  
15 that. And I think we should be figuring out  
16 how, in a rapidly evolving world, we deliver  
17 information to students in a way that's  
18 flexible to those students' needs.

19 I think we also have to look at parents  
20 and make sure that parents feel like they have  
21 the options and the tools necessary to have  
22 the best opportunity available for their kid  
23 to be able to succeed. And it may not be a  
24 "one size fits all" approach.

25 *MR. HOSEMANN:* One minute.

1                    *MR. LATINO:* I know this: If the  
2 nonteachers in the room would spend one  
3 tenth of the time we spend arguing over  
4 arcane law and funding and actually took  
5 that time and invested in the life of a  
6 child, our schools would improve tomorrow,  
7 and we wouldn't be having this debate. No  
8 one in this room wants to be last. Everyone  
9 in this room wants the next generation to be  
10 better. How we get there matters. Passing  
11 a bad amendment to the Constitution that  
12 takes power away from parents and the people  
13 they elect and giving it to a judge is not  
14 the answer. Vote no on 42 and 42A.

15                    Thank you.

16                    *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you, Mr. Latino.

17                    We're going to now enter the public  
18 phase of our discussion tonight and our forum  
19 tonight. As you know, Hernando is in DeSoto  
20 County. And this whole region is important to  
21 me. My mom grew up on Poplar Avenue right up  
22 the street, and I used to fish here when  
23 Getwell was just gravel. And we could get  
24 down Getwell then better than I can now.  
25 where's the mayor? He's going to be mad at

1 me.

2 I'd like to say we have an office here.  
3 You have an office of the Secretary of State.  
4 I thought that was critical as you grew to be  
5 over 100,000 people working and living here.  
6 It's not south Memphis; this is DeSoto County.  
7 So Mary Phillips is here. Where's Mary?  
8 There she is. She's hiding behind here. Our  
9 offices are on the square here in Hernando,  
10 and you are welcome there. If you need any  
11 information about what we're discussing  
12 tonight, it will be available through her.  
13 And we welcome you to come to your office.

14 we'll start the discussion. If y'all  
15 would rise as I call your name, please. We'll  
16 go in the order that they registered tonight.

17 First speaking for Section 42 is Stacey  
18 Graves from Hernando, Mississippi.

19 Ms. Graves, you have two to three minutes.

20 *MS. GRAVES:* Good evening. I'm Stacey  
21 Graves, and I'm the chief financial officer  
22 for DeSoto County Schools, but I'm also  
23 speaking to you as a parent. I have an  
24 eighth-grade student at Hernando Middle.

25 I want to talk to you about the facts of

1           how our legislators feel about our children  
2           and the grandchildren of DeSoto County  
3           schools. We prepare a budget for DeSoto  
4           County schools. You prepare a budget for your  
5           home. And what you do when you prepare a  
6           budget is that you put your top priorities  
7           first. The legislature has made it clear in  
8           their budget that public education is not a  
9           top priority. Our children and grandchildren  
10          have been put dead last.

11                 The state developed the MAEP, or the  
12                 Mississippi Adequate Education formula, not to  
13                 provide an excellent or outstanding education  
14                 for our children. That was not the purpose.  
15                 It was just to provide an adequate education  
16                 for our children, which currently is a level C  
17                 according to the state formula. It was  
18                 implemented in 2003 for full funding. It has  
19                 only been fully funded twice. So for all  
20                 those years there's only two times that that  
21                 has happened.

22                 well, this year is election year. We  
23                 had the highest growth -- some of the highest  
24                 growth in the state. The state filled their  
25                 rainy day fund, but yet they still did not

1 fully fund public education. If we didn't get  
2 full funding this year, we are never ever  
3 going to get full funding again. That should  
4 be a huge concern to you.

5 And we can talk all day long about a  
6 judge or talk all day long about a judge  
7 versus the legislature, but there is a balance  
8 of power. And when the legislature does not  
9 do their job, someone needs to make them be  
10 held accountable. To me, that is the judicial  
11 branch.

12 I want to talk specifically about DeSoto  
13 County Schools. Since the state implemented  
14 MAEP, a figure was given tonight of 104  
15 million; but actually now, as of 2016, if you  
16 include high growth and some of the other  
17 funding the state has cut, it's actually  
18 \$143 million since 2003. \$143 million that  
19 your children and your grandchildren deserved  
20 that you already paid the taxes for that they  
21 did not receive.

22 It is impossible -- I don't know about  
23 you, but it is impossible -- the way our  
24 funding is, we have no idea how much we are  
25 going to get. We are just at the mercy of the



1 legislature, "Oh, this is how much you're  
2 going to get this year." And it's very late  
3 in our budgeting process. I don't know how  
4 many of you could actually live from year to  
5 year not knowing how much you're going to make  
6 each year and have to adjust your mortgage,  
7 have to adjust your car payments, your health  
8 insurance. But that is the way DeSoto County  
9 Schools has to live.

10 The state provides barely half of the  
11 funding for DeSoto County Schools. The other  
12 half comes from local tax dollars. That is  
13 from the generosity of our taxpayers and  
14 conservative fiscal management. Now the state  
15 has added unfunded mandate after unfunded  
16 mandate. This year we had to deal with a  
17 third-grade reading gate, dyslexia, state  
18 testing, and a guidance counselor -- or  
19 changes in how our guidance counselors can  
20 actually perform their jobs. We've added over  
21 80 new positions just to comply with this  
22 unfunded mandate.

23 It is critical for the children of  
24 DeSoto County Schools that you vote yes for  
25 Initiative 42.

1 Thank you.

2 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you, Ms. Graves.

3 Robin Cotton from Hernando speaking  
4 against the initiative.

5 Mr. Cotton, two to three minutes.

6 *MR. COTTON:* Thank you. My name is  
7 Robin Cotton. Among other things I have  
8 taught economics in college; I have taught  
9 public school math. I currently hold a  
10 teaching license in public school. I'd tell  
11 you where I taught, but I'm afraid there's  
12 someone here from Olive Branch that may be a  
13 little upset at maybe not winning state  
14 football championship all the time. So I  
15 don't want to get tarred and feathered.

16 Okay. I think it's very important for  
17 everybody in here, when you read these words,  
18 to know this fact. I doubt very many people  
19 do. On February the 12th of this year at the  
20 Marriott in Southaven -- if there's anybody  
21 young here, it snowed that night, so you got  
22 off school the next day. You liked that.

23 There was two focus groups held, 24  
24 people. Each person was paid \$150 for two  
25 hours. The purpose of that was to put out

1 words, put out sentences, put out phrases.  
2 And those people would vote on it. And the  
3 purpose was to come up with the best words,  
4 the most convincing words, the best thing to  
5 put on these ballots to convince you, as  
6 voters, to vote for either 42 or 42A. It was  
7 mostly slanted towards 42A.

8 "Convince" is the key word. There are  
9 probably groups all over the state. I know of  
10 these two. And what they were trying to do is  
11 find the right words to convince you, number  
12 one, to change our State Constitution without  
13 really saying so; number two, to shift the  
14 power of educational funding away from our  
15 counties into Jackson. Okay?

16 The research was done by a group called  
17 "Southern Research Group," SRG. If any of you  
18 have had any political polling, you'll see the  
19 thing on your caller ID, SRG. On their  
20 website -- look it up -- in their group it  
21 says "Political consulting service." Code  
22 word for lobbyist. It says these two  
23 sentences: "Southern Research Group can  
24 tailor a winning campaign for your candidate  
25 or issue. Our seasoned staff and expansive

1 knowledge of intricacies of political  
2 campaigns ensures success at the polls." And  
3 that's what they're going for.

4 The resulting words of this study and  
5 this focus group ended up on the ballots.  
6 Your choice will be to vote 42A [as said],  
7 which would give a judge in Jackson power, or  
8 vote for 42 -- I mean 42 or 42A, which will  
9 give more power to the people in Jackson. The  
10 same people who voted just recently to keep  
11 common core, only changing the name to keep  
12 the voters happy.

13 So I say vote no, no, and no, and no.  
14 They all stink. You would be better off  
15 keeping things just like they are. If they  
16 want to cut money, if we want to increase the  
17 children's education, cut it in Jackson. Cut  
18 the dadgum overhead. Cut the overhead at the  
19 top in this county. We've got way too much  
20 money spent on too few a people.

21 Thank you.

22 *MR. HOSEMANN:* We have two members of  
23 the legislature. Representative Pat Nelson.  
24 Where's Pat? Pat's in the back right here.  
25 And then Steve Hopkins. Where's Steve?

1 There's Steve Hopkins. He's joined us. The  
2 representative-elect for your district here.

3 Next speaking for 42 is Duane Cage from  
4 Hernando, Mississippi. Mr. Cage.

5 *MR. CASE:* Thank you. My name is  
6 Duane Case from Hernando.

7 *MR. HOSEMANN:* I'm sorry.

8 *MR. CASE:* I've been called a lot  
9 worse today, so it's okay.

10 I come to you today as a principal of a  
11 middle school -- DeSoto Central Middle  
12 School -- the husband of a third-grade  
13 teacher, and the proud parent of a  
14 sixth-grader at my school, although he doesn't  
15 act like he knows me very much during the  
16 school day.

17 I will say that it is -- in the school  
18 business we use a lot of school lingo, and it  
19 is very confusing, especially to parents, when  
20 you come in and you see the blank stares on  
21 their face. I was confused -- and I consider  
22 myself pretty well educated -- trying to sign  
23 up for this, the for 42, for 42A, against 42,  
24 against 42A. Because I was, "well, if you're  
25 for this, aren't you against this?" But we

1 were signing up, so it was somewhat confusing,  
2 which is the tactic that has been used.

3 It took months and months. And I'm  
4 proud to say that my school got probably the  
5 most votes, the most handwritten -- not votes,  
6 but signing the petition for this ballot. And  
7 my parents worked very hard to get their names  
8 on that ballot. We worked very hard to get on  
9 there. And it took months for almost 200,000  
10 Mississippians to say, "We want better for our  
11 schools." It took one weekend -- it took one  
12 weekend for one person who is not here tonight  
13 to confuse everyone, including educators,  
14 because we have to look at it closely too. So  
15 Mr. Snowden did a great job of confusing us.

16 I will say this: It is not a  
17 coincidence that we spend less than anybody in  
18 the country -- or almost. We're at the bottom  
19 three or four -- and we are performing there  
20 as well. You know, what is adequate? The  
21 bare minimum. And so as we look at this and  
22 we're trying to provide for our students, we  
23 want our schools to be funded. DeSoto County  
24 is a prime example of growth that we are not  
25 paid for. And kids -- we're housing kids and

1 schooling kids that we're not getting paid  
2 for. And so every year we get farther and  
3 farther behind.

4 And people have already mentioned and  
5 some will later about how much money we've  
6 been shorted over the last seven or eight  
7 years, and so -- we've only been funded twice,  
8 fully funded twice over the last 18 years.

9 So the scare tactics that I listened  
10 to -- and he was a very good speaker; I will  
11 give him that -- we kept talking about the  
12 judge in Jackson, the judge in Jackson. What  
13 is mentioned in Initiative 42 is that if the  
14 legislators do not do what they're supposed  
15 to, their own laws that they are supposed to  
16 follow, then someone is going to make them do  
17 it.

18 And the same people that say that  
19 they're going to do what they should for us  
20 have failed us. They have failed us along the  
21 way, you know, for funding.

22 And he mentioned common core. Listen,  
23 the school districts didn't sign that up.  
24 Haley Barbour signed us up for that. So the  
25 same people that we trusted for that are going

1 to decide how much money we get for our  
2 schools. And I just encourage you to vote 42.

3 Thank you.

4 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you, Mr. Case.  
5 Thank you for working for our most precious  
6 resource.

7 Tom Minyard. Tom is speaking against.

8 *MR. MINYARD:* Thank you, Secretary  
9 Hosemann.

10 My name is Tom Minyard. I'm a resident  
11 of Hernando, Mississippi. I grew up in the  
12 Mississippi Delta, the little town of  
13 Indianola. My career took me all around the  
14 country, and I ended up in here in DeSoto for  
15 the last eight years. It's a privilege to  
16 live here. It's a great county. From  
17 everything I hear -- my kids had already  
18 finished school before I got here -- what a  
19 great school system we have here.

20 I find it interesting that there's a lot  
21 of argument about funding and increasing  
22 funding and the formula. I've looked at the  
23 formula. I've tried to understand it. It is  
24 quite, quite confusing. And I'm not sure who  
25 can make really head nor tails about exactly



1           how much has or has not been funded. But the  
2           school system here doesn't appear to be  
3           suffering from any lack of funding. Not to  
4           say that they don't need more funding or  
5           should be.

6                         But the bottom line to me is this: It's  
7           very, very simple. There's been some  
8           passionate pleas made on both parts here  
9           tonight. And the plea is when the legislature  
10          doesn't do their job, then you run to a court  
11          system to make them do it. I fundamentally  
12          disagree. I wholeheartedly vehemently  
13          disagree with that. You have an opportunity  
14          at the ballot box. Bad public officials get  
15          elected when good citizens stay home. Do you  
16          know how many people voted in this recent  
17          election? Less than 25 percent. That is  
18          shameful. We are all in that group.

19                        You know, I'm not a lawyer. I didn't  
20          sleep at the Holiday Inn Express last night.  
21          I've not read the language in great detail. I  
22          do know I've been told by some legislators  
23          that serve down in Jackson that the separate  
24          law and the code in the state of Mississippi  
25          is when the state gets sued, it will be heard

1 in Jackson. That is not debatable. That's  
2 not in dispute. That will happen. But it  
3 doesn't matter to me if it's going to be heard  
4 by a judge in DeSoto or Forrest County or my  
5 home county, original home county of Sunflower  
6 County, the last thing I want to do is give  
7 away my vote and turn it over to one person in  
8 any one county that's elected by a small  
9 percentage of the people. There must be a lot  
10 of confidence in a lot of people that that  
11 person, that one person is going to make a  
12 favorable decision.

13 To me, I'm a little bit -- I wonder  
14 what's really meant by the term "a fundamental  
15 right to an education." what I do know is  
16 that rights come from God. Our inalienable  
17 rights that our founding fathers recognized  
18 and put in the founding documents of the  
19 nation, I understand they come from God.  
20 Government doesn't give rights; government  
21 only takes rights away.

22 So what I would encourage you to do --  
23 as I'm in agreement with Mr. Cotton and  
24 Mr. Latino -- vote no, no on both of them, and  
25 let's get to the ballot box. And I think

1 Last -- on August 4th, DeSoto County voted for  
2 some new direction in this county to maybe  
3 change the way things operate down in Jackson.

4 Thank you.

5 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you, Mr. Minyard.

6 Lisa Love from Corinth, Mississippi, is  
7 the next one. Ms. Love. She rises in support  
8 of 42.

9 *MS. LOVE:* I was born in Corinth,  
10 Mississippi. It's my hometown. But I now  
11 live as my hometown in Olive Branch.

12 George Washington Carver said that  
13 "Education is the key to unlock the golden  
14 door of freedom." I'm here tonight to support  
15 Initiative 42 because that is exactly what  
16 education did for me.

17 I'm Lisa Love, principal at Overpark  
18 Elementary, which is a K-5 school in Olive  
19 Branch. I grew up in a small town in  
20 Mississippi. I'm the first person on my  
21 mother's side of the family and my father's  
22 side of the family to get a four-year degree  
23 from a university. Public education helped me  
24 change the course of my life. I have been  
25 blessed beyond measure to have a life that is

1 better than my parents have had. It is my  
2 hope and my dream that my children, my future  
3 grandchildren, and the 690 students that are  
4 at Overpark Elementary will have the  
5 opportunity to have a better life than I'm  
6 fortunate to have right now.

7 what we do every day in DeSoto County  
8 Schools ensures that this dream can indeed be  
9 their reality. why? Because the educators  
10 within this district don't strive for adequate  
11 for our children. We strive for excellence.  
12 We know that our children are our most  
13 valuable attribute. They are our entire  
14 future. Their education is not for sale, and  
15 it should never be used as a tool for anyone  
16 to make a profit.

17 The willie Herentons and the big  
18 businesses that are pushing for charter  
19 schools and for vouchers are not welcome, nor  
20 are they needed in DeSoto County. We have an  
21 excellent public school system here. We  
22 simply need for our legislators to abide by  
23 the law that they wrote and properly fund our  
24 children's education.

25 As educators, parents, grandparents,

1 guardians, and public servants, it's our  
2 responsibility to be the children's voice, to  
3 be certain that they are heard.

4 It's very, very simple. When you look  
5 at the ballot on November the 3rd, vote for  
6 the children of Mississippi, vote for public  
7 education, vote for Initiative 42.

8 Thank you for giving me the opportunity  
9 tonight to speak on behalf of our children.

10 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you, Ms. Love.

11 George Hilliard from Hernando. George  
12 is rising -- you can bring your children if  
13 you want to, George. They're all back there  
14 reading. They're going to listen to you. He  
15 rises in support of Amendment 42.

16 *MR. HILLIARD:* Fellow citizens, I am a  
17 father and a husband here in Hernando,  
18 Mississippi, and I rise today in support of  
19 Initiative 42. And I also rise as an  
20 advocate for the administrators and  
21 educators of the DeSoto County Public School  
22 System.

23 "Education is the preparation of all our  
24 children to join the community." I'm quoting.

25 The public school system in our county

1 works really well. My family, like thousands  
2 of others in DeSoto County, has been blessed  
3 by the DeSoto County School System. My  
4 daughter graduated last year. My son  
5 graduated from Hernando schools two years  
6 before her. Both of them were able to achieve  
7 national merit status. My daughter and my son  
8 spent 12 years in the Hernando school systems,  
9 and they're now in college at a university in  
10 the great state of Mississippi.

11 Their accomplishments were possible  
12 because of the direction they received from  
13 not only home, but also from the inspirational  
14 and exceptional educators they encountered.  
15 And I include both teachers and administrators  
16 in that group.

17 Along their path, these teachers and  
18 administrators inspired them to high  
19 achievement. Is there room for improvement in  
20 our schools here? I think so. And that's  
21 probably true everywhere. But what I'd like  
22 to say is we need to get these educators the  
23 money. I'm willing to trust the DeSoto County  
24 schools' administration with the tools they  
25 need to continue on their path of excellence

1 here.

2 The DeSoto County Schools inspire and  
3 motivate all of our children to excel in all  
4 aspects of their education -- whether that's  
5 science, technology, engineering, math, and  
6 the arts. And like I said before, ultimately  
7 education will make our community better. I  
8 urge you to fully support Initiative 42.

9 Thank you.

10 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you,  
11 Mr. Hilliard.

12 Chris Fleming from Grenada, Mississippi.  
13 Mr. Fleming rises in support of Measure 42.

14 *MR. FLEMING:* My name is Chris  
15 Fleming. My hometown is actually Grenada.  
16 With Mr. Cotton, I know he was talking about  
17 South Panola, because I was born in  
18 Batesville. And the phone line in your  
19 press box is there because the day I was  
20 born, my dad wanted to watch the game, and  
21 they ran the phone line from the press box  
22 across the stadium. That was November 22nd.  
23 I was born at 3:05, which, as a principal, I  
24 kind of like to be out of school late. So  
25 there is a point of reference. So for those

1 of y'all who didn't know where he's from,  
2 he's referencing he was from South Panola.  
3 And I appreciate your comments.

4 I would like to tell you I am the  
5 principal at Lewisburg High school. Prior to  
6 that I served as the principal at Lewisburg  
7 Middle School, where I represented the state  
8 of Mississippi as the principal of the year in  
9 the year 2013. I also was a teacher and a  
10 coach for 17 years prior to that. And I  
11 worked as an assistant principal for three  
12 years as well. So I have worked at all levels  
13 of education -- as a teacher, as an assistant  
14 administrator, and as lead administrator --  
15 and have been very fortunate to be the  
16 beneficiary of funding.

17 what they're not telling you tonight is  
18 the things you can't see. When they say  
19 "we're going to get funded," they want us to  
20 tell y'all what we haven't received. I'll  
21 tell you what we've done as principals and  
22 teachers in DeSoto County. We've taken what  
23 we've been given by you, the citizens of our  
24 community, and we've done a great job of being  
25 good stewards.



1           I'm a stout and a staunch believer in  
2 what the Bible tells me. The Bible is very  
3 clear in Matthew where it says "To whom much  
4 is given, much is required." I'm very much  
5 accountable for the money you guys give us.

6           And I want you to understand that what  
7 we can't show you and what none of y'all can  
8 show me is what our children are not going to  
9 be able to do if they don't receive the proper  
10 funding, and that's that soft money you guys  
11 can't see. You know, that's where they're  
12 playing tricks. I would like to ask all of  
13 y'all and every one of the representatives  
14 that have said "Please read that," if you can  
15 read it, thank the teachers who took the time  
16 to teach you how to read.

17           I would also like to point out, as  
18 Mr. Latino talked about the judge, if you  
19 understand the reading concept, at the end of  
20 42 in the measure, when it talks about -- I'm  
21 loud enough to do this -- when it talks about  
22 the chancery courts of the state shall have  
23 the power to enforce this section, if you  
24 understand close reading techniques, that only  
25 means, very seriously, if the legislators who

1 actually passed the laws don't follow their  
2 own precepts, then the judge gets to stand in  
3 and be accountable.

4 The reason we have a principal at a  
5 school is so when people in the building  
6 don't do what they're required to do or  
7 students have an issues, somebody has to hold  
8 them accountable. Otherwise we have a  
9 situation known as anarchy, which won't be  
10 good for anybody.

11 So I would like to tell you my hometown  
12 is Grenada, Mississippi, the birthplace of  
13 governors. William Winter is from Grenada.  
14 I'm very proud to say that. William Winter  
15 passed the single biggest legislation piece in  
16 our history for education, the Education  
17 Reform Act of 1982. William Winter, I heard  
18 him speak. I'm a state board member of the  
19 Mississippi Association of Secondary School  
20 Principals, so I'm not just representing  
21 DeSoto County. I have feelers all out through  
22 the state. And the principals I talked to,  
23 they said, "Please make them understand your  
24 passion for why we need to be funded."

25 William Winter has a statement, and he

1           said, "Don't tell me we can't do the right  
2           thing by all of our citizens." This is not  
3           about a small group of citizens.

4                    when they bring up the word "adequate,"  
5           you can look it up any way you want to, but it  
6           comes down to average. I have three children  
7           in DeSoto County Schools. More importantly,  
8           my father has three grandchildren. Don't you  
9           dare attempt to tell him that his  
10          grandchildren are average. We're not going to  
11          fund average. Nobody puts their child in the  
12          bed at night and prays that their child raises  
13          up to have an average lifestyle.

14                   I want to thank you for your time, and I  
15          want to remind you when you go vote, vote for  
16          42.

17                   Thank you.

18                   *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you, Mr. Fleming.

19                   Jeff Gilder from Hernando. Mr. Gilder.  
20          Did you bring your props with you?

21                   *MR. GILDER:* Yeah. I had a big speech  
22          put out. I was going to say a whole lot of  
23          things. But, you know, these guys have  
24          covered it pretty well.

25                   My name is Jeff Gilder. I'm the chief

1 academic officer of the middle schools. I've  
2 been a principal. I was principal at  
3 Southaven High School for -- assistant  
4 principal and principal for 11 years. And I  
5 love kids, plain and simple. I love  
6 everything about education. I've been in it  
7 this is my 25th year.

8 And the greatest thing you can do -- I  
9 mean, being a teacher, being in education is a  
10 calling. It's not a job. I tell people at  
11 staff development that every year. "If you're  
12 in this for a job, you need to go find  
13 something else to do."

14 In that respect, when we see things in  
15 the legislature and the 143 million that we've  
16 been shorted since the inception of MAEP,  
17 folks, that's a lot of money. And people say,  
18 "well, DeSoto County Schools, you know, we're  
19 a great school system. we'll make it anyway.  
20 we'll make it anyway." You know, that's not  
21 the point. The point is what should have been  
22 given to us so we can make our kids that much  
23 better. That's the point. And just think  
24 about it, \$143 million.

25 You know, I see -- when I was a

1 principal at Southaven High, we worked on  
2 scheduling every year. Every year it was  
3 scheduling. And every year we would have  
4 classes with 30, 31, 32, 33. You know, we  
5 would try to get them down to 25. But with  
6 the vast number -- somebody stated how many  
7 teachers that would have been over a ten-year  
8 period. Class size matters. And when the  
9 class sizes keep going up, it makes -- think  
10 of the enrichment that a teacher could do with  
11 20 in a class or helping that kid that needs  
12 that additional help, the time they can spend.  
13 It's time that we are given what we are  
14 supposed to be given.

15 You know, I made this thing right here,  
16 IOU. "IOU to the students of DeSoto County.  
17 Mississippi legislators, \$143 million." If  
18 anybody from the legislature wants to take  
19 that back, you can give it to Phil Bryant if  
20 you want to. That would make me really happy.  
21 Okay?

22 Thank you.

23 *MR. HOSEMANN:* I see why your kids are  
24 turning out so well.

25 Chad Everett from Nesbit. Mr. Everett.

1 He rises in support of Initiative Measure  
2 No. 42.

3 *MR. EVERETT:* I am Chad Everett. I'm  
4 actually a native of walls. That's my  
5 hometown. But I now live in Nesbit, and I'm  
6 a proud product of the Mississippi public  
7 schools and the best school district in the  
8 state of Mississippi, DeSoto County Schools.  
9 It's a pleasure to now work for that school  
10 district.

11 And I could stand here this evening and  
12 talk to you about the \$1.7 billion that the  
13 students of Mississippi have been shortchanged  
14 since MAEP was introduced, or I could talk  
15 about the 200,000 citizens that have already  
16 shown support for Initiative 42, but I believe  
17 that would divert attention away from what's  
18 most important in this entire discussion.  
19 That's the children in the state of  
20 Mississippi. I don't know any parent or  
21 grandparent that gets up in the morning and  
22 looks that sweet baby in the face and says,  
23 "I've given you an adequate amount of love.  
24 I've given you an adequate amount of food."  
25 And thank God that Good Shepherd did not look

1 at us and say that, "I saved you from an  
2 adequate amount of sin."

3 But for 16 of the past 18 years the  
4 members of the Mississippi Legislature have  
5 looked at the children of Mississippi, and  
6 they haven't even said that "You're worthy of  
7 adequate."

8 In 1997 I was a student in DeSoto County  
9 schools. And despite my teachers doing an  
10 excellent job with less than adequate funding,  
11 you and I both know that the children of  
12 Mississippi deserve more, which is why I'm  
13 asking you to join me on November 3rd and vote  
14 in favor of Initiative 42.

15 And to echo the words of Dr. King, tell  
16 the members of the Mississippi Legislature be  
17 true to what you said on paper and fully fund  
18 public education.

19 Now, I want to take a minute -- because  
20 I think I have just a little bit of time  
21 because that sign's not up yet -- to respond  
22 to some of the points that were made earlier.  
23 The fine gentleman over here that said he was  
24 not sure about a fundamental right to  
25 education as he looked up there. When I think

1 about the teachings of that Good Shepherd, who  
2 over in Matthew when he told us "Therefore go  
3 and make disciples, teaching them," I do  
4 believe there he indicated there was a  
5 fundamental right to education. And that's  
6 what we find in teaching, which is why I  
7 believe teaching is a calling.

8 The fine gentleman Mr. Latino used the  
9 word "disingenuous." I believe what's  
10 disingenuous is for the legislature to argue  
11 for local and state control but not even  
12 follow the law that you put on paper. Now,  
13 that's disingenuous.

14 He also mentioned somehow that putting  
15 an initiative on the ballot and letting the  
16 citizens of the state of Mississippi decide  
17 robs parents and grandparents of power. As I  
18 take a brief survey of history and I look over  
19 it, the ballot has been one of the most  
20 powerful objects of change that there has ever  
21 been. So it seems like somebody is being a  
22 little disingenuous.

23 If there is anything we should do, if we  
24 really want to empower people, we'll put it to  
25 the ballot, because that's always been what



1 has worked. And I know I may have been eating  
2 a lot of sandwiches and not paying very much  
3 attention in U.S. Government, but one of the  
4 things that I learned as we continue to talk  
5 about this judge down in Hinds County or  
6 wherever he is, checks and balances is not  
7 some new and novel concept.

8 Thank you all, and I encourage you to  
9 join me on November 3rd and vote in favor of  
10 42.

11 *MR. HOSEMANN:* All right. Nick  
12 Toungett, and he rises in support from Horn  
13 Lake, Mississippi.

14 *MR. TOUNGETT:* I'm not a very eloquent  
15 speaker and didn't sign up correctly in  
16 order, because I didn't need to follow  
17 Brother Everett there. He did a great job.

18 How many people think we have a great  
19 school district in DeSoto County? And as this  
20 gentleman stated, we're an A school district  
21 because we've done more with less than we ever  
22 have, not because we don't need it. We have  
23 done a lot with less. So that does not mean  
24 we don't need the money. It means the sky is  
25 the limit if we are fully funded.

1 I'm going to get one more crowd  
2 participation. How many would like to just  
3 pay half of their house note this month? Or  
4 none of it. How about that? That would be  
5 great if you could choose how much of your  
6 house note. You sign that agreement and say  
7 you're going to pay this X amount, the same  
8 way our legislators did in '97, and they have  
9 not paid it but twice. That would be awesome.  
10 I would be homeless, but that would be great.

11 We have cut heavily. Mr. Kuykendall has  
12 done a great job cutting heavily and all that,  
13 and we're still striving as a school district,  
14 and we've done our part.

15 They've been holding these meetings all  
16 over the state, and overwhelmingly the support  
17 has come out in favor of Initiative 42. I  
18 think tonight we've had a couple of people  
19 against it. We may have more, Mr. Hosemann,  
20 but the rest of them are for it. So the  
21 legislators have to do something. So they  
22 know that our voters want this, so "Let's try  
23 to confuse them and use scare tactics and  
24 bring up key words like 'common core.'" which  
25 is probably -- you know, so they've got to use

1 scare tactics and do all of this because they  
2 know that overwhelmingly the support is here.

3 I had some stats, and most of them were  
4 hit on. All we're asking you to do is the law  
5 you made in 1997, to stick with it and fully  
6 fund public education.

7 So remember when you go to the polls to  
8 vote, 42A means against. If we want to fully  
9 fund public education, vote for 42.

10 Thank you.

11 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you.

12 when I started -- we have something  
13 called 16th section land, for those of you who  
14 may not know what it is. But 62 counties have  
15 640,000 acres of property that are managed by  
16 the school boards and the Secretary of State's  
17 office, which is the State Land Commissioner.

18 And as part of that we started, when I  
19 started, how you manage that. It ought to be  
20 managed just like you do your school district  
21 obviously and your private businesses.

22 So when I started, y'all were receiving  
23 \$2.3 million a year to fund DeSoto County  
24 schools here. Y'all sold your school lands.  
25 In a settlement agreement the rest of the

1 state of Mississippi agreed to pay you per  
2 pupil per student.

3 So when I started, we weren't managing  
4 the 16th section land as well as we should,  
5 and your check was \$2.3 million. This year I  
6 sent Milton \$5.3 million from 16th section  
7 land. It's really important to Mississippi  
8 whoever you send down to Jackson -- and DeSoto  
9 County has been bedrock about this -- they  
10 need to support the 16th section land  
11 management. Without that, you're going to cut  
12 yourself out of \$5 million a year. If you  
13 don't think that's important, I think you can  
14 talk to anybody here that's been talking.

15 Kathy Love from Olive Branch. Ms. Love.  
16 She's from Olive Branch, and she's for  
17 Initiative 42.

18 *MS. KATHY LOVE:* I'm a little slower  
19 than the rest. I'm a grandmother.

20 I am proud to say -- extremely proud to  
21 say -- that Lisa Love is my daughter-in-law  
22 and the mother of my precious grandchildren.  
23 They're the most important thing to me in the  
24 world, as your children and grandchildren are  
25 to all of you.

1 I did not prepare any remarks tonight  
2 because I thought I would respond to what I  
3 heard. I heard wonderful things supporting  
4 42. I wholly agree with it. On the other  
5 side I heard a lot of legales. Now, I'm not a  
6 lawyer -- I'm just a grandmother -- but I feel  
7 like they're trying very hard to confuse us  
8 about what's really going on.

9 what I see as what's really going on is  
10 that the legislature made us a promise that  
11 they never have kept and do not intend to  
12 keep. So if you've been made a promise, it's  
13 really a legal contract in my mind. How do  
14 you enforce that promise? There is no  
15 enforcement now. And they can tell us that  
16 it's scary that a judge is going to do the  
17 enforcing or that we don't have the right to  
18 an education. That blows my mind.

19 Yes, there is a right to an education.  
20 As Mr. Everett said, our rights come from God.  
21 But who enforces those rights? Our government  
22 enforces those rights. Our government has to  
23 enforce all of the rights that we have. That  
24 is the reason for the Constitution of the  
25 United States of America. The United States

1 Constitution tells us that we have inalienable  
2 rights, and our government is here to enforce  
3 them.

4 So I think that this agreement that the  
5 legislature has made with us must be enforced.  
6 And if it has to be a judge, then let it be a  
7 judge. Because I will tell you one thing: If  
8 there isn't a judge to enforce it and no one  
9 else is willing to enforce it, I'm willing to  
10 get a bunch of people with pitchforks and just  
11 go on down to Jackson and say, "Look, you  
12 agreed to this. Do it."

13 Thank you. Support 42.

14 *MR. HOSEMANN:* I love my  
15 grandchildren.

16 Tom Pittman. Mr. Pittman, are you here?  
17 Mr. Pittman rises from Hernando, Mississippi,  
18 in favor of Section 42.

19 *MR. PITTMAN:* I'm Tom Pittman. I'm  
20 with the Community Foundation of Northwest  
21 Mississippi, but I'm not speaking on behalf  
22 of the Foundation. But I have to say that  
23 looking at the 11 counties that we serve  
24 throughout the Delta, including DeSoto  
25 County, does give me a perspective on public

1 education. So, to me, it's a real simple  
2 thing that if you want an adequate public  
3 education in Mississippi, then you vote for  
4 42. I mean, that's what it means.

5 I mean, right now the Constitution just  
6 says every child is entitled to a free  
7 education. And back in the 1950s we passed a  
8 thing that said there's a minimum foundation,  
9 so you could get a minimum education. And  
10 then, thank goodness, in the 1990s the  
11 legislature said we should have an adequate  
12 education. But then, as everybody has said,  
13 they haven't followed that, so we haven't even  
14 gotten an adequate education.

15 So it seems to me that if we want an  
16 adequate education, we should vote for 42 and  
17 put that in the Constitution.

18 My family has been here in Mississippi  
19 for 200 years. And contrary to what  
20 Mr. Latino said, there was no legislature then  
21 because it didn't become a state until two  
22 years after that. But we got here two years  
23 before it became a state and have enjoyed  
24 being here. I've actually had the good  
25 fortune to see almost a third of that history

1           myself.

2                       And that's one of the reasons I wanted  
3           to speak to this, because I do remember back  
4           in 1982 when Governor Winter was trying to get  
5           the Education Reform Act passed. And people  
6           thought it was a horrible thing to have public  
7           kindergartens and the sky was going to fall.  
8           You think Mr. Latino was talking about scary  
9           things. I mean, just the thought of having  
10          kindergartens was going to wreck everything.  
11          We seem to have done okay with that.

12                      I remember in 1987 when a group of  
13          citizens got the program to try to get  
14          four-lane highways throughout Mississippi so  
15          we wouldn't have the highest death rate on  
16          highways in the nation. People said, "Oh, we  
17          can't afford it. It's going to be terrible.  
18          You're just going to wreck the state having  
19          all these four-lane highways. You can't pay  
20          for them." Well, the four-lane highways have  
21          done pretty well. And I don't think too many  
22          people have noticed how much it cost, because  
23          it was just a penny a gallon on gas, and we  
24          got four-lane highways.

25                      I can remember when all the county



1 supervisors were opposed to putting a unit  
2 system in. Didn't want the constitutional  
3 amendment to destroy their little kingdoms and  
4 force the county government to operate as a  
5 county government. Thought everything was  
6 going to fall apart. Well, I think it's  
7 actually been less corrupt. We've done better  
8 with that amendment.

9 I just point all this out to say it  
10 seems to me the only reason not to vote for  
11 this amendment is because you're scared of a  
12 bunch of stuff that probably is not going  
13 happen. It probably won't happen.

14 But what we do know: If you don't vote  
15 for it, we'll continue to have education  
16 that's not adequately funded. That's almost  
17 for certain.

18 And I think every point I could possibly  
19 make has been made except for a couple of  
20 pearls of wisdom from my cousin Lanier. And  
21 he said, "You may not always get what you pay  
22 for, but you sure won't get what you don't pay  
23 for." So if you want an adequate education,  
24 don't expect it if you don't pay for it. If  
25 we pay for it, we might get it and may not;

1 but if we don't pay for it, we certainly won't  
2 get it.

3 And the only other thing I would say is  
4 I did do a little math and found out the state  
5 the last four years has had a surplus of  
6 almost \$900 million. That's \$900 million the  
7 state received -- don't cut me off now -- the  
8 state received almost \$900 million more than  
9 it had budgeted. It underfunded education,  
10 according to the adequate education formula,  
11 by about a billion dollars. So it almost had  
12 enough money in surplus to have funded  
13 education, but it chose not to. I say vote  
14 for Initiative 42, and let's fund it.

15 Thank you.

16 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you, Tom.

17 Mr. Reese Norris. Mr. Norris is from  
18 Senatobia, Mississippi, and he is in favor of  
19 Measure 42.

20 *MR. NORRIS:* My name is Reese Norris,  
21 and I am from Senatobia. In fact, I live  
22 about a half-mile from my mom, where I grew  
23 up. I've had the privilege the last 19  
24 years to serve as the choir director at  
25 Hernando Middle School.

1           My perspective is going to be quite  
2           different than most you've heard tonight.  
3           Mine is going to be very telescopic. I'm here  
4           to speak to the arts. I'm going to give you  
5           some information. And I know that it's  
6           probably no surprise to many of you that the  
7           choir and band program from DeSoto County are  
8           fabulous, but I still might surprise you with  
9           some figures that I'm going to share.

10           If you've ever gone to one of the  
11           hundreds of concerts or halftime shows or  
12           marching competitions that our choirs and  
13           bands put on every single year, it won't be a  
14           surprise to you that they provide some  
15           incredible quality. What will surprise you a  
16           little bit perhaps is that our success is not  
17           just homegrown. If you compare the success of  
18           the DeSoto County School choir and bands to  
19           the ones in the other parts of the state, what  
20           you will find is that we fare very well in  
21           competition. For example, since 2006 the  
22           bands from DeSoto County Schools have won  
23           seven state championships. Since 2005 at the  
24           Ole Miss Choral Festival, our choirs have won  
25           16 out of a possible 20 grand sweepstakes

1 championships.

2 would it be difficult for you to believe  
3 that this is actually causing a problem? It  
4 is. Do you know to put new sheet music  
5 sufficiently in the hands of every student in  
6 the band and choir in our county, it would  
7 cost in excess of \$120,000 a year. Add to the  
8 cost the outfitting of the ensembles of the  
9 choirs and the band and the cost of them, of  
10 the extra needs, including travel, and it  
11 increases exponentially.

12 The teachers in the bands and choirs in  
13 DeSoto County are dedicated teachers, and  
14 they're going to do an excellent job  
15 regardless of the situation. But what you  
16 have now, especially in the arts, is you have  
17 teachers out there constantly beating the  
18 bushes begging for money or fundraising  
19 constantly because our schools have provided  
20 such an incredible quality growth in the arts  
21 programs, our school district simply cannot  
22 keep up with the financial needs that are  
23 required to fund for an organization the size  
24 of our bands and choirs.

25 These ensembles work tirelessly on the

1 most -- the smallest detail. I see former  
2 students; I see former band directors out  
3 there. You know the amount of time that you  
4 might spend on that one measure to make it  
5 sound exactly as it was intended to sound.

6 Hold that thought. Here are some  
7 numbers for you to digest. This is really  
8 special. There are more students playing in  
9 our bands and singing in our choirs than the  
10 entire population of Sardis, Como, and  
11 Coldwater combined. Let that sink in for just  
12 a moment. Over 4,830 students in our bands  
13 and choirs, and not one of them has a space  
14 that's big enough for them to perform.

15 Hernando has a small performing arts  
16 center. We perform two or three concerts back  
17 to back just to get our students on the stage  
18 and our parents in the seats. Where do the  
19 other bands and choirs perform? In a gym.  
20 And if you've ever been in a gym and tried to  
21 talk . . . All that time, an entire semester  
22 of work -- and those kids work hard -- lost in  
23 that terrible acoustic. I'm not talking about  
24 something small. I'm talking about a small  
25 town worth of people who need support.

1 Thank you.

2 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you, Mr. Norris.

3 I appreciate what you do. I particularly  
4 appreciate the fact that I've been  
5 specifically requested not to sing at  
6 church. I said, "well, the Bible says that  
7 you only have to have a joyful noise." My  
8 children told me I'm only halfway there.

9 walker Sturgeon, Horn Lake, Mississippi.

10 He is in favor of Initiative 42. And there's  
11 Mr. Sturgeon.

12 *MR. STURGEON:* well, I'm an  
13 argumentative soul, and I came tonight  
14 wanting to hear a hardy debate, but it  
15 sounds to me like I'm going to be preaching  
16 to the choir, so I'll go ahead and get  
17 started.

18 I'm a product of Mississippi public  
19 schools. I graduated from the best public  
20 university in this state. And I came through  
21 all that a libertarian. I don't believe in  
22 big government spending. I don't believe in a  
23 lot of interaction between the government and  
24 individuals at all.

25 But what I do believe about government

1 is that it's all about priorities. Priorities  
2 are the most important thing. You've got to  
3 start from the top and work your way down.

4 In this state education just is not a  
5 priority. We start with nonessential things,  
6 and then education gets the leftovers.  
7 Education should not be getting the leftovers  
8 in our state. Education should be getting the  
9 first slice of the pie. Then you can cut  
10 everything else. That's fine. Education  
11 should come first.

12 A lot of people tonight have talked  
13 about how, "Okay, so it doesn't talk about  
14 funding and all that kind of stuff." It's not  
15 about funding. It's about making our  
16 education a priority to our legislature. As  
17 it is, we're just part of the general fund.  
18 The general fund is not what we need to be a  
19 part of. We need to be a central component of  
20 our legislature. We just don't get it as it  
21 is.

22 Now, I had a few more things to say, but  
23 I just want to leave with this: If we want to  
24 make our state great, we've got to get our  
25 priorities straight. Vote yes on 42.

1                    *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you,  
2 Mr. Sturgeon.

3                    Joyce Helmick. Ms. Helmick. She spoke  
4 at the first one of these a couple of days  
5 ago. From Hernando, Mississippi.

6                    *MS. HELMICK:* So everybody want to say  
7 welcome home?

8                    I am Joyce Helmick. I'm the mother of  
9 two public school graduates right here in  
10 DeSoto County. I'm the grandmother of the  
11 cutest little kindergartener down at Hernando  
12 Elementary School. I'm a 37-year veteran of  
13 public school teaching in Mississippi, and 25  
14 of those right here in DeSoto County over  
15 there at Olive Branch. Very proud.

16                    Also, tonight I speak to you as  
17 president of the Mississippi Association of  
18 Educators. Two years ago I left the classroom  
19 to assume this position. I represent  
20 thousands of teachers across this state. MAE  
21 supports I-42 because we know that it is the  
22 only way that we can ensure that our state  
23 legislators provide funding that gives our  
24 schools the tools, the resources, and the  
25 support that they need.



1           Our members are out there feverishly  
2 supporting Initiative 42 and campaigning with  
3 parents, with friends, and community leaders  
4 to support Initiative 42. We know that  
5 Initiative 42 will ensure that our lawmakers  
6 fulfill the promise that they made to our  
7 students.

8           As president of the Mississippi  
9 Association of Educators, I have had the  
10 unique opportunity to visit school after  
11 school after school and talk with educators  
12 and more educators and more educators and  
13 many, many, many parents. And I know  
14 firsthand the need for funding because of all  
15 those things that we've heard about tonight --  
16 the leaky roofs, the poor buses, the lack of  
17 books, the overcrowded classrooms; and, yes,  
18 students going to school right now in  
19 buildings with no air conditioning. Imagine  
20 that. I've been there and I've seen it.

21           As a matter of fact, today I visited  
22 five schools this morning in some counties  
23 south of us. And within miles of each other,  
24 just almost within a good marathon running  
25 distance -- if you know what I mean -- I saw

1 one school that was beautifully decorated.  
2 Fresh paint on the walls, smelled good, pretty  
3 desks, a library full of wonderful books. And  
4 just right down the road I saw a school that  
5 was dark, no decorations on the walls. Those  
6 teachers can't afford it because they are  
7 providing their students with clothing, with  
8 lunch. So they don't use their money to  
9 decorate the halls; they're providing their  
10 students with some necessities.

11 So I support 42, and my educators that  
12 belong to our association and all the  
13 educators in Mississippi support Initiative 42  
14 because we know that it's about all students  
15 in this state. We're fortunate. I love  
16 teaching in DeSoto County, and I love the fact  
17 that my students went to school here, and I  
18 loved teaching all those brilliant students  
19 that I taught for 25 years in DeSoto County.  
20 But I can assure you that not all school  
21 students have the same opportunities that they  
22 do in DeSoto County. And that's why we need  
23 to support Initiative 42.

24 Thank you.

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

1           Atticus Nelson. Mr. Nelson is from Horn  
2 Lake, Mississippi, and he is speaking in favor  
3 of Amendment 42, Measure 42.

4           *MR. NELSON:* My name is Atticus  
5 Nelson, and I'm from Horn Lake, Mississippi,  
6 and a proud student in DeSoto County  
7 Schools, and I like wearing bow ties.

8           I, like everyone else in this room,  
9 would like to think that I understand the  
10 importance of education and what it does; that  
11 it leads to many facets of life; that it leads  
12 to higher wages, better jobs, decreased crime,  
13 increased civic activism; makes people  
14 happier. It increases economic growth. I  
15 like to think that education is important, and  
16 that's what I want us to remember when it  
17 comes to all of this, because we like to get  
18 into the nitty-gritty.

19           What we need to have in the forefront of  
20 our minds is which option benefits education  
21 the most. I think of a Latin phrase when  
22 we're up here debating and giving our  
23 speeches, and it's "carpe diem," which means  
24 "seize the day." And, ironically, I didn't  
25 learn that in Latin class because it was too

1 full.

2 But when it comes to Initiative 42, I  
3 definitely think that we should keep it on the  
4 forefront of our minds when it comes to carpe  
5 diem and seize the day.

6 Now, as I do follow what Mr. Latino  
7 said, and I look and I read this, I look at  
8 42A, which is basically the status quo, and I  
9 think we're overlooking a lot of what happens.  
10 So right now -- and Ms. Stacey Graves alluded  
11 to this in the beginning -- is that right now  
12 we have no idea how much money we're going to  
13 get. They're, like, "Okay, you're going to  
14 get this percentage of the budget."

15 "Oh, okay."

16 Next year, "You're going to get this  
17 different percentage of the budget."

18 "Dude, what about the last percentage?  
19 what am I going to get?"

20 "I have absolutely no idea."

21 So what this new initiative does is it  
22 gives us a finite number. It tells us what  
23 we're going to do.

24 I love my extracurricular activities. I  
25 love them. I'm in the speech and debate team,

1 the chess team, the knowledge bowl team, the  
2 mock trial team, the youth and government  
3 team, the model UN, FCS. I love it all. It's  
4 wonderful. But when we don't have a finite  
5 number to go off of, when it's not stable, you  
6 cut things that I love, like speech and  
7 debate, like chess, like knowledge bowl.  
8 Those things get the brunt of harm, and I will  
9 not stand for that.

10 So that's what Initiative 42 does. It  
11 gives you a stable number. It gives you a  
12 finite number to tell you that "This is what  
13 you will have." I will have an adequate  
14 amount of education. And as far as I'm  
15 concerned, as these many people have gotten up  
16 here and told you, these people are not  
17 following what they've been told to do. "You  
18 do this."

19 "No."

20 So what Initiative 42 tries to do is  
21 say, "well, you're not following the law, so  
22 now we're going to try and stop it." 42A says  
23 "You're not going to follow the law, and we're  
24 just going to let you not follow the law."  
25 That's a problem. So that's what I would like

1 Initiative 42 to do.

2 I think of another Latin phrase that I  
3 use in speech and debate all the time --  
4 "cogita ante salis," which means "look before  
5 you leap," or, roughly, "think before you  
6 leap." And if we look at Initiative 42 and  
7 42A, we need to think before we leap and not  
8 go for Initiative 42A because it essentially  
9 is the status quo. It's not stable education  
10 budget. We are going to cut the things that I  
11 love, such as speech and debate, knowledge  
12 bowl, all of these things, because we don't  
13 have a stable budget to go off of. That's  
14 what Initiative 42 does.

15 So I encourage all of us, on  
16 November 3rd, the key date, to carpe diem and  
17 seize the day.

18 Thank you all.

19 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Your namesake would be  
20 proud of you.

21 Amy Brown. Ms. Brown, is she still  
22 here? Jogging up to the front.

23 *MS. BROWN:* I have two students in the  
24 first grade who have waited for almost two  
25 hours for me to speak.

1                    *MR. HOSEMANN:* I know. I'm sorry.

2                    *MS. BROWN:* But that's how dedicated I  
3 am.

4                    I'm Amy Holland Brown. I am supposed to  
5 give you a card. I will be very short.

6                    I have heard so many good points and  
7 misinformation all rolled up into one. My  
8 response is really threefold. I am a product,  
9 like most of you here, of the public school  
10 system of Mississippi. I'm from Columbus.  
11 First through twelfth grade at New Hope High  
12 School. My husband Chris is from Hattiesburg.  
13 We keep hearing about Forrest County. That's  
14 great. I don't know why Forrest County is  
15 brought into this. But, anyway, he's also a  
16 product of Mississippi public schools.

17                    So that's one perspective. We know what  
18 it can do, because then I went on to another  
19 great university in the state, Mississippi  
20 State, and then went to graduate school and  
21 law school at Ole Miss. So we are just spread  
22 all over. And we truly believe in the public  
23 school system.

24                    But another perspective is that when we  
25 got finished with our great education of years

1 and years and years, instead of moving to  
2 Memphis, we chose to stay in DeSoto County.  
3 And we had not had children at that point. We  
4 now have four boys, but we had not had  
5 children at that point and stayed in Hernando  
6 for these great schools that are not quite  
7 adequate.

8 I mean, people ask us all the time,  
9 "Yeah, they really could be. Right? I mean,  
10 they're safe." And I thank Mr. Kuykendall for  
11 that, and I thank all of our educators for  
12 that. And I do feel like our children are  
13 getting a good education. So from my second  
14 perspective as a mother, I totally believe in  
15 public education. Four boys. A  
16 seventh-grader who my husband was dealing with  
17 at Meet the Tigers tonight, my fifth-grader,  
18 and our twin first-graders. So we're in it  
19 for the long haul, as all of you are who are  
20 in favor of education.

21 But when we're asked to look at this, my  
22 third perspective is I'm an attorney, and I'm  
23 going to look at every one of those words.  
24 And I don't like being told that Measure 42  
25 has something to do with funding, and in fact



1           it has everything to do with the  
2           constitutional principle of checks and  
3           balances and accountability.

4           The funding is there because the  
5           legislature, the division of power under our  
6           Constitution that says they make the laws, are  
7           not wanting to be held to the second power of  
8           checks and balances. And the court system is  
9           there for that. I know we have a lot of  
10          cynicism about our courts, and I've seen it.  
11          Mr. Latino has obviously seen it and decided  
12          to get out. That's okay. But to say it's in  
13          the hands of a chancery court judge in  
14          Jackson -- Hinds County was the chosen venue.  
15          If the legislature doesn't like that, they can  
16          change the venue. The venue has nothing to do  
17          with it. what it has to do with is somebody  
18          holding them accountable. And 42A again just  
19          says, "Hey, the legislature gets all the  
20          power." I would like that. We would all like  
21          that. We've heard about budgets. My husband  
22          can tell you -- he just walked in -- I don't  
23          like a budget. Okay? That's not my forte.  
24          But what I do like is our constitutional  
25          principles of checks and balances, of checking

1           that power, that unfettered power that clearly  
2           for the last however many years has said,  
3           "Yeah, we made the law, and we get to  
4           completely disregard it."

5           So from those three perspectives, I'm  
6           going to vote in favor of 42. It might not be  
7           perfect. Mr. Latino, as all litigators, can  
8           find a little bit wrong with everything.  
9           well, we've got to do something. I think  
10          that's what we're all in agreement with. And  
11          we just can't trust the legislature. And I  
12          have a family member in the legislature. We  
13          just can't trust them to hand it over to them  
14          because, I'm sorry, we don't quite believe you  
15          to do everything you're going to say that  
16          you're going to do. So that's why I vote in  
17          favor of 42.

18                 Thank you.

19                 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thanks, Mom.

20                 James Comans. Mr. Comans is in favor of  
21          42. He's from Southaven.

22                 *MR. COMANS:* Thank you, Mr. Hosemann.

23                 You'll have to forgive me. I'm a little  
24          bit under the weather tonight, but it's  
25          important for me to be here.

1           My name is James Comans of Southaven.  
2           My wife Robbie is here with me. I'm a teacher  
3           here in DeSoto County because of Mr. Duane  
4           Case. He's the best principal I've ever  
5           worked for.

6           I'm a product of Jackson public schools  
7           and the Mississippi School for Math and  
8           Science. I decided to go into education to  
9           make a difference here. I wanted to make it  
10          my job to fix unemployment, to fix poverty,  
11          broken lives. But I'll be straight with you:  
12          we don't have enough money to do it. We  
13          don't. Mississippi spends less per student  
14          than all but four other states just by having  
15          the most ground to cover. We've only fully  
16          funded education twice in the last 18 years.  
17          Those were two of our best years.

18          Some folks don't think that funding is  
19          important. They can't see that there's a  
20          problem. I co-administrate a blog called  
21          "Show and Tell Mississippi." We ask people  
22          from all over the state that work inside  
23          schools to share their true stories of  
24          Mississippi funding so that the truth can get  
25          out, because teachers are scared to tell the

1 truth because of all the confusion. So we've  
2 already heard stories of poisonous mold, leaky  
3 roofs, teachers digging through dumpsters for  
4 textbooks, educators -- literally there's a  
5 woman who sent her statement in the mail  
6 because she was scared of her husband finding  
7 the trail because he was against 42. She sent  
8 us a story of having to choose between  
9 providing supplies for her students or diapers  
10 for her own kids. Is that really the state  
11 that you want to live in?

12 So I've never been as politically  
13 involved as I have been this year, because  
14 this is just too important for us. And you  
15 see the people behind 42 are not the  
16 politicians and the lobbyists and, you know,  
17 the charter school businessmen. We're your  
18 neighbors. We're your church family. We're  
19 the people you see in the aisles at Kroger,  
20 you know.

21 So I know the teachers of Mississippi,  
22 they can do it. We can do it. We really want  
23 to do it. It's our passion. But we will  
24 spend every last dime we have to teach your  
25 kids -- and we have -- while Jackson has used

1 your tax dollars to speculate on tax breaks  
2 instead of giving what your kids are owed.  
3 And so we're trying to fight for that.

4 Eighteen years ago the legislature told  
5 us -- we didn't ask for it -- the legislature  
6 told us how much we need in order to have  
7 adequate schools. And then I guess they  
8 decided we didn't need them. So year after  
9 year we've just had a string of broken  
10 promises. So when is it going to stop?

11 And the politicians and the lobbyists  
12 who are terrified of being held accountable,  
13 they're going to do everything they can to  
14 confuse you and sew as much doubt in your  
15 head -- and, by the way, "provide for"? It's  
16 right there, "provide for." If you can figure  
17 out a way to provide for schools without  
18 paying for them, I'm all ears, but I think  
19 "provide for" is pretty clear about funding.  
20 So that's what it is. It's right there for  
21 us. And it's on his side too.

22 By the way, wasn't it kind of weird that  
23 the person who was supposed to tell us to vote  
24 for 42A told us to vote against it? That was  
25 really weird, you guys. So all that they want

1 to do is confuse you and send you away in  
2 fear. And that's not what we're about. You  
3 know, we can continue hoping that the  
4 politicians in Jackson will toss some more  
5 table scraps down to us, you know. "Please,  
6 maybe two more years in the next eighteen  
7 years," while their big business buddies feast  
8 on the public dime.

9 And that's all fine, except that we can  
10 remind them who they work for in November.  
11 And we can vote yes on 42. And we, the  
12 citizens of Mississippi, can show the world  
13 that no matter what outside agitators are  
14 trying to make a quick buck off our kids, in  
15 this state we're going to fund public  
16 education first. And so that's why I'm voting  
17 yes on 42.

18 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you, Mr. Comans.

19 Cedric Richardson. Mr. Richardson is  
20 from Sardis, Mississippi, and he is in favor  
21 of Amendment 42.

22 *MR. RICHARDSON:* My name is Cedric  
23 Richardson. I'm the superintendent of North  
24 Panola School District. I'm originally from  
25 Senatobia, Mississippi, and a graduate of

1 Senatobia High School. And I served four  
2 years in the United States Army. For seven  
3 months I served in the Persian Gulf War. On  
4 last weekend I attended my oldest son's  
5 graduation from the United States Navy,  
6 who's also a graduate of Senatobia High  
7 School. So I'm a proud father of children  
8 who attend public education and who have  
9 attended public education.

10 I represent North Panola School  
11 District, a small community in rural  
12 Mississippi. Our communities consist of  
13 Sardis, Como, and Crenshaw. We don't have a  
14 large local tax base. Every penny we receive  
15 is very important to make sure that those  
16 children have a right to a quality public  
17 education and a quality learning experience.

18 In the North Panola School District our  
19 high school is a B-rated high school. On the  
20 third-grade reading assessment, 85 percent of  
21 our children -- who most of them come from  
22 high poverty backgrounds -- passed the  
23 third-grade reading assessment. When the  
24 state required our kindergarten children to  
25 take the MCAS assessment, our children grew

1           200 points from the beginning of the school  
2           year to the end of the school year.

3           I'm here to say we are making  
4           improvements. We are improving the quality of  
5           education that we're offering to our children,  
6           and the results show it. But I'm also here to  
7           say that the children in the North Panola  
8           School District, they deserve more.

9           Mr. Norris talked about the fine arts  
10          programs, the musical programs in DeSoto  
11          County. It is very expensive to buy concert  
12          equipment, timpanis, tubas. It is very  
13          expensive to purchase French horns, to have  
14          art classes, music classes, updated computer  
15          equipment that goes out all the time.

16          So what is happening and what Initiative  
17          42 can do for us is to give our children a  
18          fair share of the quality of education that  
19          Mississippi -- all Mississippi children  
20          deserve, all of the children of Mississippi  
21          deserve. We are not just standing for status  
22          quo. We're standing in the state of  
23          Mississippi because every child, no matter  
24          what the name of the district, what the name  
25          of the community is, they deserve better. And



1 I believe that the great state of Mississippi,  
2 this initiative shows that the people of  
3 Mississippi want better for the children of  
4 Mississippi.

5 Thank you.

6 *MR. HOSEMANN:* Thank you,  
7 Mr. Richardson.

8 We have now heard from everyone who  
9 signed up to speak, and I want to thank each  
10 and every one of you.

11 I have two thoughts real quickly. One  
12 thought is that all these principals did a  
13 really good job on educating people. Y'all  
14 speak eloquently.

15 The second is to remind us that if you  
16 go turn on the TV tonight, you won't see  
17 public forums like this in other countries  
18 where you get to stand up before your fellow  
19 citizen -- man and woman -- and talk about so  
20 critical an issue as education. It reminds  
21 me, too, of why I wouldn't want to live  
22 anywhere else but Mississippi.

23 So thank you all for coming. You'll be  
24 able to see every word of this as soon as she  
25 gets through typing it. It will be put up on

1           our website. We have six more of these that I  
2           will be attending around the state. I  
3           encourage you to look at them and, most  
4           importantly, to go vote.

5                     Thank you for coming tonight.

6                     (PROCEEDINGS CONCLUDED AT 7:30 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 106 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 9th day of September, 2015.

SHARRON F. ALLEN, CSR, RPR  
*CSR NO. 1144*

My Commission Expires:

November 5, 2015