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"GREAT" CAMPAIGN LAUNCH IN MISSISSIPPI BY GOVERNOR BARBOUR TO TRAIN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

Workers to get tuition-free training

Gulfport, MS – A "GREAT" new effort to find and train construction workers to rebuild Mississippi and the Gulf Coast region was formally launched today in Gulfport by Governor Haley Barbour and business leaders. Gulfport is one of the initial markets in Mississippi for the **Gulf Rebuild: Education, Advancement and Training (GREAT)** campaign, a broad effort that will seek to recruit people into construction training programs across the state.

The GREAT campaign is a recruitment effort of the Gulf Coast Workforce Development Initiative, which seeks to recruit and train up to 20,000 new construction workers across the Gulf Coast in basic construction skills by 2009.

"Mississippi's people have been working hard to rebuild our state following Hurricanes Katrina, but the fact is that much more work still needs to be done, and we could make ever greater progress if we had more construction workers," Barbour said.

"This program is a win-win-win for Mississippi," Barbour added. "Men and women are getting trained tuition free for well-paying and long-term jobs in the construction industry; businesses are getting skilled workers, and we can continue our work to rebuild Mississippi and keep our economy growing."

"We are pleased that the State's system of WIN Job Centers is a part of this project. It is a perfect complement for all of the training and services available at the Centers to individuals in need of training and retraining and to businesses looking for skilled workers." said Tommye Dale Favre, Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Employment Security.

"This is the right project at the right time for Mississippi," added Brian Sanderson, President of the Gulf Coast Business Council. "It will be an important step forward in developing a skilled workforce in our state and will boost our efforts to ensure a healthy economic future for the Gulf South."

"We are proud to be a part of this program to help rebuild our state and the lives of residents here," said Dr. Willis Lott, President of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College. "It is critical that we can meet the unprecedented surge in demand for a trained workforce to assist in rebuilding our state."

At today's event, organizers announced that people interested in taking part in the free training for construction jobs can call a toll-free number – **1-888-52-GREAT** (47328) – and or visit the campaign's website – www.imgreat.org.

The Initiative will draw attention to these new training opportunities through radio advertisements, strategic marketing and other outreach efforts throughout the state.

The Gulf Coast Workforce Development Initiative is a broad partnership of business groups, community organizations, educators, construction trade groups and local, state and federal governments in response to the need to rebuild the region following the 2005 hurricanes. Business Roundtable, an association of 160 CEOs of leading U.S. companies, initiated the effort and is committing \$5 million to the Initiative.

The state of Mississippi received a grant for \$5 million to work through community and junior colleges to provide construction training to help to rebuild the Gulf Coast. The state also received a National Emergency Grant for the Department of Labor to provide other needed training and employment services to individuals affected by Hurricane Katrina.

Participants will receive up to 120 clock hours of free training comprised of topics including basic safety, construction math, hand tools, power tools, blueprint reading and basic rigging. The training is designed to prepare them for entry-level construction jobs and help them develop a career in the construction industry.

Training and curriculum materials are free for the four-week entry skills course, and tools will be provided to trainees who fulfill jobs with contractors through this Initiative. To qualify for the training, participants must be a legal U.S. resident impacted by Hurricane Katrina, complete an assessment and consent to a drug test.

Training will take place at the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, Jones Junior College, and Pearl River Community College. In addition to Gulfport, the GREAT campaign has been piloted in Jackson and will expand to other cities in Mississippi. The Initiative is also operating in Louisiana and plans to expand to other communities in the region.

A list of Initiative partners and contributors are available at www.imgreat.org.

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Gulf Rebuild: Education, Advancement and Training, or GREAT campaign, is sponsored by the Gulf Coast Workforce Development Initiative, a partnership of federal, state and local government agencies, businesses, community organizations and construction trade groups and associations, working together to recruit and train up to 20,000 skilled construction craft workers for the Gulf Coast region by the end of 2009. The GREAT campaign is primarily funded by members of Business Roundtable, an association of 160 CEOs of leading U.S. companies. For more information please visit our website, www.imgreat.org.