

*Mississippi Association of Chiefs of Police
Spring Conference & Training
Thursday, May 31, 2001
7pm*

Good evening, and thank you for the invitation to be here tonight.

There's something about being in a room full of police officers. I've never felt safer than I do right now.

I believe we share some similarities in our jobs. I came across a list recently, titled “You are a Police Officer If...” Many of the items on the list apply to my job as well...

You are a police officer (or a governor)
if...

- You disbelieve 90% of what you hear and 75% of what you see;
- You have your weekends planned for a year;
- You believe the worst will happen if anyone says, “boy, it sure is quiet;”
- You believe that coffee is a food group.

I'm proud to have the opportunity to be a part of this event, because it gives me a chance to say a sincere "thank you" to you and all those officers who serve with you.

That's something we don't do often enough with our law enforcement officers.

Because of the work you do each and every day, the people of Mississippi know that their streets, their families, and their homes are safer.

All over this state, thousands of police officers are out on the streets “to protect and to serve.” They are out there on foot, on bikes and motorcycles, in cars.

These officers – the men and women of your departments – are the front line in our struggle against those who would do us harm.

Your leadership in this effort is appreciated. As the chiefs of police for departments all over Mississippi, you set the standard for those officers you command.

Even with your dedication and that of the officers who serve under you, we still have many areas of concern when we talk about public safety.

We are seeing use of recreational drugs such as Ecstasy. Our young people are falling victim to this substance that doesn't discriminate against anyone. It inflicts an equal amount of harm on those who take it.

Our Bureau of Narcotics, in cooperation with local authorities, is leading the battle against this drug. With your help, progress is being made.

The young people who fall prey to illicit drugs can be saved, and that is our common purpose. These young people represent the future of our state and we must do all we can to keep them strong.

Another drug, although legal for those of age, is just as dangerous. It is cheaper and easier to purchase than Ecstasy, but the results of its abuse can be just as tragic.

Alcohol abuse does more than affect those who abuse it. It puts innocent citizens at risk when someone chooses to drink and drive.

You know all too well the results of actions like this.

That's why I have supported efforts to lower the Blood Alcohol Content level from .1 percent to .08 percent.

By targeting those who would choose to drink too much and attempt to drive, we send a message to those who break the law as well as those who obey it.

We will not tolerate anyone who would endanger innocent people, and we will do everything within our power to protect those who respect the law.

Another step forward in the protection of our citizens will come with making seat belt use mandatory and setting penalties to enforce it.

Too many Mississippians are killed needlessly because they weren't wearing a seat belt.

I can tell you that I'm alive tonight because of a seat belt. Every 14 seconds someone in America is injured in a car accident.

Every 12 minutes, someone is killed.

Seat belts work. I'm proof of that. They are the best means of preventing fatalities and serious injuries.

It doesn't take more than three seconds to click a seat belt, and it's an easy habit to pick up.

Making seat belt use the law, and putting penalties in place to support this law, will improve the safety of our roads and save lives.

The recent “Click It or Ticket” campaign has brought a new awareness to this issue. Over the Memorial Day holiday, roadblocks were set up all over the state as part of this effort.

There were only two fatalities over the holiday weekend, but that's still two deaths too many...

The safety of our citizens is the driving force behind our work. I thank you for the role you play, for the risks you take, for the commitment you make every day.

God bless you, your officers and your families.