

*Remarks for the
Mississippi Highway Patrol Awards Day
March 6, 2002*

This is a great day for the men and women of the Mississippi Highway Patrol, and especially for Rick Garrison.

The passage of House Bill 594 signals a strong commitment from the State of Mississippi to the troopers and employees of the MHP.

This new law lowers the amount of service necessary to be eligible for disability retirement.

It offers a stronger safety net for those who serve on the front lines, protecting the safety and security of our people.

And, it means Rick Garrison will have the support of the Highway Safety Patrol Retirement System.

Today's awards ceremony offers a chance to say "thank you" to people like Rick Garrison, to those we honor today, and all who give so much to our state.

This is something we should do more often, and it doesn't have to be in a setting like this. We should take every opportunity to express our appreciation.

It doesn't matter if you're just walking down the street or getting a speeding ticket – I encourage all Mississippians to take a moment and say “thanks” for the work you do.

All of you who serve in law enforcement do so much that is taken for granted.

Unfortunately, it is usually the tragedies that remind us of the risks that are taken every day, risks each you know all too well.

We all want to feel safe. But, in finding that safety we cannot forget the work that you do in leading us to it.

We aren't the ones on patrol. We aren't the ones faced with life-or-death situations on a regular basis. We aren't the ones who are first on the scene of a fatal accident or disturbing crime scene.

That's your job – and you do it well.

I've heard it said that the best car safety device is a rear-view mirror with a state trooper in it, and I'm sure there are plenty of drivers who would share that view.

The work you do on a daily basis hasn't changed since the first law enforcement officers began walking a beat. The tools of the trade may be different, but the work's the same – it's the same in Mississippi as it around the nation and the world.

One interesting thing about your work – at the end of the day, there's no tangible product. There's no way to measure what you've done in the day, other than to see kids playing outside; people wearing their seatbelts; families walking through their neighborhoods in the evening.

We don't see the dark streets you patrol at night. We don't know about the thoughts that run through your mind as you go into a dangerous situation with your gun drawn.

We don't know the feelings in your heart at the end of a long and difficult shift.

We do know that every man and woman who wears a badge and takes an oath "to serve and protect" has qualities that help them rise above the rest.

You are our heroes. You are people of honor – in your instinct and in your actions.

You are the best in your world, and more than good enough for any other world.

You are the people who keep us safe – and we thank you for it. May God bless you, your families, and those you protect.