
**Remarks by U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao
at the Fraternal Order of Police 56th Biennial National Conference
4 August 2003**

Thank you for that kind introduction. I want to thank you and all the members of the Fraternal Order of Police for the opportunity to address you this morning. It is a pleasure to work with you, with your executive board, and with Executive Director Jim Pasco. I also want to give a big hello to my home state delegation from Kentucky.

For all of us, as Americans, and as members and friends of the Fraternal Order of Police, the last several months have seen triumph and trial. Our men and women in uniform achieved one of the most stunning military victories the world has ever witnessed in Iraq. But now we grapple with the difficult, and sometimes costly, task of winning the peace.

I want you to be assured that this Administration will do all in its power to protect American lives, to give our soldiers the full support they need, and to bring the last vestiges of Saddam Hussein's regime to final justice.

We've had success—and struggle—in our economy as well. It is a testimony to the resilience and strength of America that just two months after the devastating terrorist attacks of September 11th, our economy came out of a recession that began in mid-2000. Make no mistake about it, those attacks were intended to bring our economy to its knees. The terrorists believed that if they hit us, America would be too soft to respond, that we would simply crumble. They were wrong. Instead, the opposite happened. This nation picked itself up, got back in the game, and started the difficult process of rebuilding and recovery.

I don't need to tell you it hasn't been easy. Even though the economy is clearly coming back, there are still too many people who want jobs but can't find them. That is why we've started something at the Department of Labor called the High Growth Job Training Initiative—to train people for jobs in sectors that are growing and hiring workers.

And that is why the President fought for and passed a Jobs and Growth Plan that will give families more money to spend, and employers more incentive to buy new equipment, expand their operations and create jobs.

Over the last two years, we have been through some tough times as a nation. Someday, each of us in this room will tell the next generation what America went through, and what part we played in all of it. They will ask us, "What was it like? How did the country respond?" And we will say: it was challenging, even frightening. Many people suffered. But we all learned one thing: this is a country that doesn't back down, that doesn't give up, and that doesn't stop caring about those who need help.

As I said at the outset, this has also been a period of triumph and trial for all of you. First of all, you've got a lot to be proud of. The Fraternal Order of Police is recognized as the preeminent police organization in the country—in terms of membership, in terms of leadership, in terms of clout, and in terms of heart. All of you have made the FOP number one in this country.

You've experienced growing success as an organization. But you've also felt some deep sorrow. I share your grief over the loss of three shining stars in the FOP leadership: former President Pat Stark, FOP Vice President Ray Franklin, and FOP President Steve Young.

Pat, of course, passed away after a long, distinguished career. Ray was from my home state of Kentucky. He was taken at too young an age. We send our special thoughts to his wife Edith and family.

Steve Young was a giant in your organization: a national leader, a friend to both the mighty and the lowly, and—above all else—a police officer who cared most about making his home community of Marion, Ohio a safer place to live. When I became Secretary of Labor, Steve Young was the first labor leader to reach out and seek ways we could work together to improve the lives of law enforcement officers and thereby make our streets and neighborhoods safer. That kind of outreach and relationship building made Steve so successful at turning the FOP into a more visible and effective organization, emphasizing its labor credentials as never before.

In the same way, I appreciate the fact that one of the first meetings Chuck Canterbury had as newly installed President of the FOP was at the Department of Labor—seeking to continue the productive relationship we have built to help law enforcement officers.

These efforts have made the Fraternal Order of Police one of the most respected and effective legislative operations in Washington. My friend, FOP Executive Director Jim Pasco, is an indispensable part of this team. Jim heads up a Washington operation that you can be proud of, because it is protecting and advancing your interests every day.

Let me give you just two examples of how our close relationship has borne fruit.

In May of 2001, I was privileged to be the first Secretary of Labor to attend the National Peace Officers Memorial. I have attended that very special ceremony every year since. The Memorial Service is a tribute to the memories of fallen officers. But for me, it was also a time to meet the families of these heroes. After hearing their stories, I felt that the Department of Labor needed to do something to help these families.

We worked with your FOP leadership to create a \$2 million scholarship program that will help spouses of fallen law enforcement officers provide for their families and carry on with their lives. The money comes from the Labor Department and goes to the National FOP Foundation, to pay for education and job training, such as community college

certification courses. This will help surviving spouses upgrade their job skills and find good employment opportunities so they can support themselves and their families.

Steve Young helped conceive and develop this scholarship program. That's because he was not only a great leader, but also a devoted family man who was deeply concerned about the spouses and children of fallen officers. That is why I'm pleased that Denise Young is here today as I announce that this program will hereafter be named the Steve Young Memorial Scholarship program. It is a fitting tribute to a patriot, police officer and dedicated husband and father.

I am also pleased to announce that, later this fall, the Department of Labor will be honoring Steve Young, the labor leader. The Department houses a permanent exhibit called The Labor Hall of Fame. This is a museum that honors America's greatest labor figures. Past inductees have included Walter Reuther, John L. Lewis, Samuel Gompers and Lane Kirkland.

This September, we will induct another great labor leader to the Hall of Fame: the FOP's own Steve Young. If I invite all of you, will you all come?

Finally, I really appreciate that President Canterbury is continuing Steve Young's legacy of working with the Department and the Administration to improve the lives of police officers. And let me tell all of you, Chuck's approach is getting results and building respect for your organization.

Under Chuck's leadership, the FOP was the very first union to weigh in on behalf of America's law enforcement community on the Department of Labor's proposed changes to the "white collar" overtime exemption regulations. We received the FOP's comments, we hear you loud and clear, and—rest assured—we will consider them very seriously.

I can also tell you that the Department doesn't intend to cut overtime for police officers by re-classifying them as "white-collar" workers. Our goal is to extend overtime protections to workers earning less than \$22,100 a year who currently don't get it because the outdated regulations allow them to be classified as exempt "white-collar" workers. The current salary level is \$8,000. Economists say that this change alone would guarantee overtime pay to an additional 1.3 million low-wage workers.

The bottom line is that Chuck Canterbury and the FOP are known for bringing facts and constructive solutions to the table—not rhetoric and political maneuvering. That's why you are respected, that's why you get results, and that's why police officers trust the FOP to look out for their interests.

I want all of you to know that you have a friend in the Department of Labor and me as you work to improve the lives of law enforcement officers and make your communities safe. On behalf of the entire Administration, we appreciate what you do every day. Thank you for your courage and sacrifice. Have a wonderful convention.