



Opening Remarks

Conference 2000 Opening Remarks
Margaret M. Moore, Executive Director

WIFLE

Introductions (on dais) of :

*Honorable Janet Reno, Attorney General for the United States;
Honorable Elizabeth Brizee, Assist Secretary for Enforcement, Treasury Department;
Director Brad Buckles, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms;
Assistant Director, Gale Rossides, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms;
Women in Federal Law Enforcement Executive Committee President Monica Blodgett;
Monsignor Salvatore Criscuolo.*

Recognitions: (in audience)

*Honorable James Johnson, Undersecretary of Enforcement, Treasury Department;
Deputy Director Patrick Hynes, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms;
Director Penny Harrington, National Center for Women and Policing;
Anna-Lena Barth, President of the European Network of Policing;
President Ida Gillis, National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives.*

Presentation of Colors by the Honor Guard Metropolitan Police Department.

Singing of National Anthem by Angela Parker.

The issue of women working in traditionally male dominated jobs has been a contentious one in our society for many years. The introduction of women in law enforcement has had to be one of the most difficult workforce transformations in America. The challenge to overcome the belief that law enforcement was a purely physical job and that women were not physically capable of performing the job was the first and greatest obstacle. The second greatest challenge was to broaden the general perception of law enforcement and demonstrate that law enforcement requires a myriad of qualities and capabilities. Despite ample evidence of the unique value women bring to the profession, these challenges are still ongoing.

Let's look at where we have come from.

It wasn't until 1971 that women were granted the authority to carry firearms in the federal government. Since then, women have overcome many barriers and made many contributions. Through the Interagency Committee of WIFLE, many of the accomplishments of the early women have been recognized but some of these contributions have been over-looked and undervalued.

Let's look at where we are.

A 1998 survey, by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, showed that women accounted for 14.2% of Federal officers, about the same as 1996. Our state and local law enforcement counterparts are not

fairing much better with 14.3% average representation of women nationwide. With an annual increase of .5% women will not achieve equity in law enforcement for generations. And as noted by the National Center for Women and Policing, women of color have it even tougher in state and local policing with only 6.8% represented on the average nationwide.

Law enforcement is facing a crisis...a crisis-is of public confidence. Police leaders and executives are under pressure to transform the very nature of the relationship between law enforcement and the communities they serve. Communities are demanding a shift in focus from traditional law enforcement practices toward a more modern approach that emphasizes communication, cooperation and problem solving.

Communication, collaboration and cooperation...essential skills for all of law enforcement, and proven skills in which women are in the forefront. Research in the United States and of police departments internationally confirm that these are the skills in which women excel and are essential for effective law enforcement. **We are good at this stuff!**

An estimate of only 3 %, of all women in federal law enforcement serve in the upper level management positions. The fact that there is a handful of women who have achieved top level positions is notable but clearly demonstrates that our contributions are not having the full impact in the larger law enforcement community.

We have become accustomed to being the only woman or one of the only women on an operation, in a briefing, in an office or in management. And when I speak about women in law enforcement I am also speaking about those women in the professional series who work in critical positions in support of the law enforcement mission. Look around you. When was the last time you were in the majority? (Probably at the last WIFLE conference you attended.) Today we are the majority. Let us celebrate the majority. Don't become complacent. Will you be defined as the token woman?

This is where we need to be:

This is a call to action. What are we to do and what are your agencies to do:

By emphasizing the value that women bring to law enforcement, agencies would better be served in their recruitment efforts. Again, research has shown that the job is really about the way we talk to people. How do your agencies conduct their recruitment and selection process? We need to capitalize on the interpersonal skills that women bring to the job to a much greater degree. These skills are so critically important in determining the effectiveness of law enforcement and have not been traditionally emphasized in the recruitment and selection standards. In doing so we will be recruiting and selecting the best women and men and changing the way we conduct the law enforcement business.

There has been no formal research performed in the federal sector to determine what agencies need to do to attract and recruit more women into law enforcement positions. We will not accept what I have heard of late that women do not want the jobs. Agencies have to work smarter in designing their recruitment strategies. In order to recruit women, you must know what we want from an organization. Let me share one study recently conducted by the New York State Police Department. Their study found that the number one reason women were attracted to their organization was financial and job security –no difference than men.. The next three priorities in order of importance to women and a departure from the men were:

Supportive work climate

Job enrichment

Family friendly work policies

Therefore, if your agency is not emphasizing these priorities and marketing them properly you will not attract nor recruit women in law enforcement. But more importantly if your workplace climate is not supportive of women's contributions you will be missing out on qualities and skills needed to meet community expectations and those qualities and skills that make agencies evolve into progressive law enforcement agencies for the 21st century.

That is the challenge for law enforcement agency heads and managers and the challenge for us women in Federal Law enforcement is to create an environment for other qualified women to succeed. Success takes work. One of the critical components to success is mentoring. Mentoring is reaching out to women in your organizations that you have identified to provide with guidance. Lead them to opportunities to reach their potential. Encourage them and help them to reach measures and goals beyond that which you have achieved.

I challenge you. I challenge both women in Federal Law enforcement and you managers to change the culture of Federal law enforcement to become more inclusive, communicative & Cooperative. Understand what women bring to the table and to each of their organizations, unique gifts. The recruitment, promotion and retention of women must remain in the forefront of issues for women in federal law enforcement. We challenge the leaders of the Federal law enforcement community to confront the systemic barriers to the success of women in Federal law enforcement and promote the most qualified most valuable assets to your organization. She (or he) may not look like you. She (or he) may not reflect the same background as you. She (or he) may not have the same experience as you. Take pride in promoting qualified individuals that will serve to build and strengthen your organizations.