

Good evening.

On behalf of Minnesotans, I would like to welcome the IACP to Minneapolis. We are honored to have this opportunity to host the world's largest — and oldest — professional organization of law enforcement officials.

And I am especially pleased to be addressing this State and Provincial Police Conference, because as governor, I have a very close and cordial relationship with the Minnesota State Patrol.

In fact, the State Patrol provides executive protection for me and my family. As you may know, I tend to keep a low profile, but my family and I are still very reliant on the troopers who are assigned to keep us safe. And we are grateful for the excellent work they do.

Whatever the scope of your agency's responsibilities, you all are all committed to keeping your citizens safe. And you are all probably being asked to do more with less.

Since September 11, law enforcement professionals are being asked to take on more responsibilities, including preventing and responding to acts of terrorism.

And you do this in addition to your efforts to provide safe communities, schools, and roadways.

As chief law enforcement officers, you are accountable for seeing that all of these things happen. So, I want to commend and thank you for tremendous job you do. It takes courage to be a leader. Especially in times when so much depends on your judgment and decision-making ability.

I wish the politicians who talk about getting tough on crime had some experience with trying to enforce the law. In this country, we tend to pass new, redundant legislation, instead of giving you tools and resources to enforce the laws that are already on the books.

We have some of those problems in Minnesota, but we've also had some real success stories in the past few years. One of these is the development of CriMNet — a gigantic project that is being engineered by a small group in our Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.

When our nation was attacked last September, we learned a difficult lesson about the need to share information at all levels. CriMNet is a plan to integrate Minnesota's criminal justice networks, so our law enforcement agencies, courts and prisons can share information such as fingerprints and photographic images, warrant status, restraining orders, and conviction status.

As you know, criminals are extremely transient. They move from county to the county, from state to state, and across the nation. And, as we have seen with terrorists, even from country to country.

CriMNet will help law enforcement personnel to track and capture dangerous offenders in our state. We are also working with other states to create a regional network for sharing information and improving public safety.

And federal authorities are currently looking a CriMNet as a possible model for safeguarding our nation.

I know you are doing great things in your states and provinces as well — but you're in my state, so I get to brag about Minnesota a little.

And the last thing I want to talk about directly involves the Minnesota State Patrol, as well as county and local law enforcement agencies.

During my term as governor, I have gotten a lot of education about the importance of traffic safety. And it bothers me that the deadliest behaviors on our nation's roadways tend to be perceived as victimless crimes.

People who drive while impaired by alcohol or drugs, speed, and engage in aggressive and distracted driving cause hundreds of deaths and thousands of injuries annually on Minnesota roads. And probably on the roads of your state or province, as well.

It's hard to understand why people don't comprehend that driving is a privilege. And with it comes the responsibility of not endangering others.

I do have to admit, however, that when I became governor in November of 1998, I was not convinced that it was the state's responsibility to get people to buckle up. But I have come to believe that seat belt use is more than a personal decision.

Seat belts save lives, prevent injuries, and keep health care costs down. But some people will only buckle up in response to aggressive, visible enforcement of the seat belt laws.

We do not have a primary seat belt law in this state. And throughout most of this year, our seatbelt use rate has hovered at about 74 percent.

Last May, approximately 370 Minnesota law enforcement agencies set out to change the behavior of Minnesotans who don't use seat belts. They did a lot of educating and wrote a lot of tickets. And I am happy to announce that Minnesota has a seat belt use rate of 80 percent today.

I know you have come to this conference with your own success stories — and probably with many challenges and goals, as well. Again, I commend you for your willingness to lead — and to protect and serve — in these difficult times.

Thank you for the important work you do — and for bringing your mission to Minnesota.

Governor Jesse Ventura
Talking Points
IACP [International Association of Chiefs of Police]Conference
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MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

I hope you enjoy the conference and our state.