

35th Annual National Peace Officers' Memorial Service

May 15, 2016

National President Chuck Canterbury's Memorial Speech

Good morning, my name is Chuck Canterbury and as the President of the National Fraternal Order of Police and on behalf of the 330,000 members of the FOP I want to welcome you to The National Peace Officers Memorial Service.

We come here today to honor members of the law enforcement family who have paid the ultimate sacrifice. This tribute allows us to show you, the family members, that we will never let our Nation forget your sacrifices.

In 1985, Ronald Reagan in his annual message in honor of Police Week said: "Let us resolve to do all in our power as citizens of these United States to support our law enforcement officers in their work and pray that no more of them are taken from their families and those they so ably serve. In this way, those who have laid down their lives for their fellowman will not have died in vain." President Reagan was right and I am sure he would be appalled at what is happening in today's world to our law enforcement community.

In these tumultuous times in our country, the violence against police has become so common place that many just feel that it is part of our duties. Well, I am here today to say that it is not. Nowhere in the job descriptions for becoming a law enforcement officer does it say that you are required to be assaulted or killed in the course of your duties.

As President of the FOP I am saying, **Enough is Enough**. I am asking for the silent majority of Americans to stand up and say stop this violence. I am asking Congress to take up the issue of violence against police by including Law Enforcement Officers in the Hate Crime Legislation. Hate crimes are defined as any crime that is motivated by the bias of the offender. Well, when police officers are attacked for merely wearing a badge or star then that's a hate crime.

In 2015, 15 law enforcement officers were ambushed for merely wearing the uniform. We should never get so complacent in this country that we believe that being ambushed is just part of an officer's duties. Our jobs require us to face many situations that the average citizen would run from and we understand and accept that danger, but we shall never accept that assaults on law enforcement officers are acceptable and expected. Because they are not!!!

I have said many times that, during my career, I knew that law enforcement was a dangerous profession and that we would be placed in situations where we could be hurt or killed in the line of duty. As the father of a police officer who works the street every day, I now understand the fear that we as families go through everyday when our loved ones walk out the door. I understand the anxiety that we as family members have when the phone rings in the middle of the night, I understand the fear we have as family members when we hear a news report about an officer-involved incident on local media, I understand the fear we have as family members when we hear a siren or see an ambulance responding to an incident, and I also understand that, as a family member, my voice is important to let our elected officials know that we want, **no we demand**, that they do everything possible to protect our loved ones. Law enforcement officers do everything we can to protect them, **now** it's time for them to step up and protect our officers. We ask that all Americans tell Congress to act on our call for Hate Crime Legislation.

I have always attempted to refrain from calls for legislative actions during this service. This service is for you the families and provides a way for us to show you that we will keep our pledge to never let our Nation forget your loss. We also know that we as the law enforcement community are the core to a movement to push for laws that will protect our family members. We are and will be the loudest voices in these calls for action and we also know that our survivors know better than all that we must act and act now.

President Abraham Lincoln said "In the end, it's not the years in your life that count; it's the life in your years." We all know that the heroes we come here today to honor understood that the quality of all Americans lives is why we strive to protect their freedom every day. We know that the heroes we honor here today gave their all to allow the rest of us to put that **life** in our years.

In the words of Vivian Eney Cross, a survivor, "It is not how these officers died that made them hero's it is how they lived."

God Bless you the families of our heroes, God Bless our law enforcement community and God Bless the United States of America.