

- Good afternoon. I am honored to stand before you today as your commander of the South Carolina Highway Patrol.
- Today is an exciting day...an important step into our future as we commemorate 80 years of service to the State of South Carolina and its citizens.
- This class is the future that will build upon our foundation and lay the groundwork for decades to come.
- Those of us standing here today -- as well as the Basic 88 class -- owe a debt of gratitude to those men and women who have served before us and continue to stand alongside us.
- Will the retirees of the South Carolina Highway Patrol please stand to be recognized?
- Earlier today, our Basic 88 Class had an opportunity to hear words of wisdom from our retirees. More than 50 retirees came to support our new class. Thank you for caring enough to make this investment in our future. Your insight provides a vital link from the past to the present.
- Additionally, we are joined today by troopers from other states across the Southeast...state officials...fellow law enforcement agencies...as well as members of our General Assembly. I want to thank each of you for your partnership and the role you play in supporting the men and women of this agency.
- I would like to ask our Training, Recruiting and Employment Staff to please rise to be recognized? You have dedicated countless hours that have helped this group of men and women arrive here today.

- I would ask that my command staff please join me in recognizing you
- I also want to thank the administrative support staff of the Highway Patrol who work behind the scenes everyday providing vital services to the men and women in uniform. Thank you.
- To our new class...It is an honor to make it to this point... You have made it this far because someone along the way encouraged you, disciplined you and laid the foundation that we have built upon to make you into a South Carolina state trooper.
- It may have been your parents, your grandparents, aunts or uncles...they deserve our appreciation.
- So I say thank you to the graduates' families -- I know it is a sacrifice to be away from your family and miss important occasions.
- This sacrifice – while not easy – is the beginning of a journey of commitment. I wish I could tell you that today would mark the last time you will be away from your family, but public service *is* a sacrifice. That is what makes first responders a group set apart. You – and your family -- willingly and knowingly -- give something of yourself for the greater good.
- The month of May is the time of year when we remember those officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty. I want to take this opportunity to recognize the families of our fallen troopers. Would you please rise?
- You hold a special place within the body of this Highway Patrol family. Over the last year, we have lost two troopers in the line-of-duty – L/Cpl. Jonathan Nash and most recently Cpl. Kevin Cusack. We remember their lives and their service today.

- We also lost a fine young man, Trooper First Class Andrew McInville in a tragic off-duty incident. We are fortunate to have members of the McInville family, Andy's sisters -- Becky and Beth, and cousin, Kathy – to present our music today. I also want to note and recognize Andy's brother. Aaron will be graduating as part of Basic 88 carrying on a family tradition of law enforcement. Aaron, I know your brother would have been proud of you.

And to our graduates.....

Congratulations and welcome to the ranks of the South Carolina Highway Patrol.

- Today, you join an organization steeped in tradition, honor and pride. You are writing a new chapter in the history of the Highway Patrol.
- Right now, I know you are anxious to get behind the wheel of your new car and to share these special moments with your family ... but first, I ask you to pause a few moments and listen carefully to what I have to say to you.
- When I assumed command of this organization in 2009, I did so with the understanding that I would adhere to a certain set of goals and principles.
- I have tried to take every opportunity to speak with you personally about what I believe should be our mission and to impress upon you the gravity of the oath you will take today.
- Five months ago, it may have been hard for you to imagine this day would ever come.

- Your training is hard but being a state trooper is even harder. The first time you are faced with fear or indecision on your job, you will draw on the lessons learned here over the past 19 weeks.
- You have made an investment in the South Carolina Highway Patrol and we have made an investment in you.
- Today, you will make an important transition from trainee to trooper. But the training doesn't stop today.
- On the road, you will take the lessons learned in the classroom and on the driving range -- in a controlled environment -- and put them to test in real time.
- The South Carolina Highway Patrol has a proud history of serving and protecting our state and its citizens.
- Like any organization, we are not perfect.
- To ignore or try to forget those hard times within our ranks -- times where one person's actions had a ripple effect on us all -- would be irresponsible. But we do not have to accept past failures as the norm and we *should* not.
- In order to effect change, we have to see our failures as opportunities. I think we need to ask ourselves: What lessons can we take to prevent this from happening again? How do we make ourselves into an organization that is exemplary in the eyes of the public we serve?
- The public has every right to the expectation of fairness, ethics and honesty from those sworn to serve and protect. If you violate that trust, you hurt us all.

- I have talked with you many times over the course of your training about commitment, attitude and honesty. I believe these are the foundation of everything you do from this point forward.
- Yesterday, the command staff and I ran alongside you in the final Challenge Run.
- You were presented a brick that should remind you everyday of your strong foundation, which is based on commitment, attitude and honesty. The director and I once again reminded you of our expectations.
- I once sat where you sit. I know today is a day full of anticipation. But it should also be a sobering one. One where you feel and understand the weight of the responsibility you are being called to bear.
- On the job... You will have ups and downs, good days and bad. But you must never compromise your ethics and values. They are the very base upon which this organization and law enforcement rests.
- As an officer of the law, you submit yourself to a higher standard of conduct. The right to anonymity is left behind once you decide to wear this uniform.
- After more than 20 years of being in this uniform, I can tell you unequivocally that you are and -- always will be -- judged more harshly than everyone else. It is a reality that you cannot avoid.
- Everything you do is under a microscope. And rightly so.
- One thing I've learned over my career is that I'm always a state trooper. Whether I am at my child's ball game, in a restaurant having dinner or on a day off.

- People will always expect you to act like a trooper. It is impossible to separate your conduct on and off the job.
- This is sometimes a heavy burden to bear. But you can and will do it – just like those sitting with you today have done.
- Your shoulders are strong.
- You are trained, mentored and built for this challenge.
- You **will** succeed...but not without examining your standards, motivations and actions every day.
- There will be times when you will wonder if your efforts make a difference.
- I assure you that you will have a tremendous impact on the public you serve if you remain consistent, hard working and fair.
- You will see the number of lives lost -- by the statistics -- but you will never know how many you lives you saved.
- Later today, you will be administered your oath of office. I want to remind you – now more than ever -- that these are not just words. They represent a noble and challenging undertaking.
- The words you recite are a reminder that law enforcement holds the public trust. We act with the authority afforded us by the people we have pledged to serve.
- Consider your oath daily as you go about conducting your law enforcement activities.
- Remember your core values:

Selfless Service...

Integrity...

Responsibility.

- Live by those words daily. It's not about you. It's about being the very best public servant you can be.
- In closing, I wish each of you – our newest troopers – the very best for a long and prosperous career serving your state.
- You will not be the most highly paid.
- You will not sit behind a big desk in a corner office.
- Every day – rain or shine -- you will place yourself in harm's way to help others.
- There are few careers where you have the opportunity to do something different and meaningful each and every day...
- ...to help someone stranded ...
- ...offer comfort at a moment of great loss
- ...and to be a role model for young children.
- I can think of no greater calling than to serve your fellow man in such an honorable way.
- May God bless and protect each of you as you begin this new and exciting chapter in your careers and your lives.
- Thank you....
- And now it is my pleasure to introduce the director of the South Carolina Department of Public Safety, Mark Keel....