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Remarks Prepared for Delivery by
Deputy Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao
Swearing-in Ceremony
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Mr. Vice President, Justice O'Connor, Secretary Skinner, Secretary Dole, Members of Congress, Chairman Atwater, and dear friends:

Thank you for taking the time to join me this afternoon. I am touched and gratified by your presence.

Thank you Secretary Skinner for your kind words. Had I know I was going to hear such nice words, I would have held my reception earlier.

I am honored to be here today. To me, government service is much more than 'just a job.' It is a commitment to our nation, to excellence, knowing that the real beneficiaries of a job well done are the American people. The work we do in government is not always glamorous. But the relevance of the tasks we perform is profound.

Since Secretary Skinner and I arrived at the Department of Transportation, we have been in the forefront of a number of critical issues. Our priorities have included the fight against terrorism in the sky and protection of the marine environment. These efforts reflect our overall commitment to keeping the transportation system both safe and competitive.

Toward that end, it is our goal to develop a comprehensive transportation policy for the 21st century. But, whatever the issue, the leadership of Secretary Skinner -- and the talent, dedication and expertise of the team he has assembled -- have impressed me deeply. I am privileged to be part of that team.

As you might have guessed, I feel strongly about the privilege of public service. My commitment is inspired by the life of one couple. Their story is not unusual. In many ways, it is typically American. And yet, to me, it is a very special story.

As a young couple, they saw their native land torn apart by war and revolution. They dreamed of a land of opportunity beyond the sea. So, leaving their family

and friends, they packed up their three young children and came to America.

It was not easy. The young father took two full time jobs while attending graduate school. The young mother spoke no English, and struggled to care for her family in a strange land.

Through it all, their one abiding hope was the advancement of their children. Their third grade daughter knew no English, and would copy everything on the blackboard into her notebook. Each night, he would translate and teach her that day's lesson.

I remember how I used to reverse the d's and b's and the p's and the q's, and his struggle to make sense of my notebook. I remember his patience, strength and optimism -- and that of my mother's. Without this land of peace and opportunity, my parents could never have built what they have, and their children could never have become what they are today.

I am deeply honored by the trust placed in me by the President, the Vice President, and Secretary Skinner. I look forward to serving this new Administration, and

working with my associates at the Department of Transportation on the challenging issues facing us.

Thank you again for being here.