"The Constitution is our boss"

Participants at the conference agreed that the mandate of the police is to serve as guardians of the Constitution and to protect the rights of the people they serve. "The Constitution is our boss," said New Haven (Connecticut) Police Chief Dean Esserman. "We are not warriors, we are guardians. I tell my new recruits that the oath they take is not to me. The oath is to the Constitution. I take the same oath. The boss is the Constitution."

Constitutional policing, therefore, is the foundation of community policing. It is impossible for law enforcement agencies to form positive and productive relationships with the communities they serve if those communities do not trust the police, or if the communities do not believe that the police see their mission as protecting civil rights as well as public safety.