

Female Federal Law Enforcers Gather For Tampa Conference



U.S. Attorney Robert O'Neill speaks during the opening of the Women in Federal Law Enforcement (WIFLE) annual conference Tuesday in Tampa.

By [KEITH MORELLI](#) | The Tampa Tribune

Published: June 24, 2008

TAMPA - Women in federal law enforcement have come a long way since 1971, when it was illegal for a female federal officer to carry a gun.

A long way.

And, said Margie Moore, executive director of Women in Federal Law Enforcement, who is in Tampa this week for WIFLE's ninth annual leadership conference, there's a long way to go.

Moore, a retired Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives agent, is a "founding mother" of the nonprofit organization, which boasts as many as 1,000 members, almost 700 of whom were at the conference.

"Only 16 percent of the 106,000 federal law enforcement officers are women," she said, adding that the goal of the group is gender equality, and that means 50 percent of the work force.

"We have a ways to go," she said this morning before opening remarks were delivered in the crowded ballroom at the downtown Hyatt Regency Tampa. U.S. Attorney Robert O'Neill, Tampa Mayor Pam Iorio and Border Patrol chief David Aguilar delivered the welcoming remarks this morning.

In the hallway, Carol Harvey couldn't help but grin. Another founding mother of the organization in 1999, Harvey said, "This all started with six women sitting around a table."

The independent nonprofit WIFLE is an outgrowth of a government committee formed in the 1970s, she said.

The conference includes several career leadership seminars at the Hyatt. Membership is across the spectrum of federal law enforcement agencies from the FBI to Border Patrol. A push for recruitment is part of the agenda.

Rebecca Salazar is president of the organization and an agent with the Border Patrol. She said the turnout this year "is the most I've ever seen."

"It's more than we expected," she said. "It's great."

She said that when she first enrolled in a law enforcement academy with an eye on a federal job, she was one of six women in the class of 50 students. Four of her classmates dropped out, she said.

Things are different now, she said.

"We are not alone," she said. "There are a lot of women with the same challenges, and we are sharing the same experiences."

Reporter Keith Morelli can be reached at (813) 259-7760 or kmorelli@tampatrib.com.