

U.S. Secretary of Transportation

Secretary Elaine L. Chao is the 18th U.S. Secretary of Transportation, and comes to the Department with extensive experience in the transportation sector. Early in her career, she specialized in transportation financing in the private sector. She began her career in public service working on transportation and trade issues at the White House, then served as Deputy Maritime Administrator, Chairman of the Federal Maritime Commission, and Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation.



Secretary Chao understands the critical role of the Department in ensuring the safety of our country's transportation systems. She is also keenly aware of the key role infrastructure plays in our nation's economic competitiveness, and in strengthening economic growth in both the urban and rural areas of our country.

Secretary Chao has a distinguished career in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. An immigrant who arrived in America at the age of eight speaking no English, she received her citizenship at the age of 19. Her experience transitioning to a new country has motivated her to devote most of her professional life to ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to build better lives for themselves and their families.

This is Secretary Chao's second cabinet-level post. She served as the 24th U.S. Secretary of Labor from 2001-2009, the first Asian-American woman to be appointed to a President's Cabinet in American history. As U.S. Secretary of Labor, she focused on increasing the competitiveness of America's workforce in a global economy, promoted job creation, and achieved record results in workplace safety and health.

Prior to the Department of Labor, Secretary Chao was President and Chief Executive Officer of United Way of America, where she restored public trust and confidence in one of America's premier institutions of private charitable giving, after it had been tarnished by financial mismanagement and abuse. Secretary Chao also served as Director of the Peace Corps, where she established the first programs in the Baltic nations and the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union.

Secretary Chao earned her MBA from the Harvard Business School and an economics degree from Mount Holyoke College. Honored for her extensive record

of accomplishments and public service, she is the recipient of 36 honorary doctorate degrees.

Secretary Chao is a resident of Jefferson County, Kentucky. Prior to her appointment as Secretary of Transportation, she was a Distinguished Fellow at Hudson Institute. She is the eldest of six daughters born to Dr. James S.C. Chao and the late Mrs. Ruth Mulan Chu Chao.

Updated: Thursday, April 20, 2017