



FOR RELEASE
March 7, 2024

Statement attribution:
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WASPC 2024 POST LEGISLATIVE SESSION STATEMENT

(Lacey, WA) --- The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) has worked to promote sensible public safety policies that respect victims of crime, improve and recognize public safety as a core function of government, and respond to the expectations of the community. We appreciate that the 2024 session began to bring about balanced outcomes that center on supporting fair, transparent and accountable policing, and provides better support to the men and women who honorably serve our fellow Washingtonians.

Several public safety measures were supported in the 2024 supplemental budget. This includes full state funding for training through the state's Basic Law Enforcement Academies, including another regional academy in northwest Washington; more funding for the Washington Auto Theft Prevention Authority to help law enforcement work to reduce auto thefts across the state; training classes for corrections officers; and support for regional drug task forces.

While we are disappointed more was not accomplished to provide state funds to recruit and retain additional officers for Washington communities, a new law will allow agencies to hire deferred action for childhood arrivals (DACA) recipients through the civil service process, including law enforcement positions. We have always supported expanding the pool of non-traditional candidates, and reducing barriers to becoming officers, deputies, and troopers. Officers with multicultural backgrounds will benefit the communities they serve.

The passage of I-2113 (police pursuits) grants law enforcement officers the discretion they need to balance the risks of a pursuit against the risks of letting an offender drive away, and to act in the best interest of public safety. Law enforcement recognizes the potential dangers of pursuits and shares in the belief that no one wants more pursuits. WASPC will continue to support funding for additional technology and resources which empower their decision **not** to chase, but ensure they have what they need to apprehend a suspect later. We were disappointed that SB 6200/ HB 2390, which had bipartisan support and would have provided additional tools and consequences, so pursuit was not the only option, was not passed into law.

WASPC will continue to work with legislators to find common ground to prepare for additional legislative action in the future. Foremost is the need for more resources to recruit and retain peace officers. For more than a dozen years, Washington has had the fewest law enforcement officers per capita, ranking 51st in the nation. Every community deserves a public safety agency that is well-trained, well-equipped, and well-staffed to deliver the best public service.

WASPC and its members have long supported constructive, balanced reforms focused on principles that build trust, recognize the sanctity of life, and bring justice to victims of crime. Law enforcement need the appropriate tools to fight and prevent crime.

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