



Washington Association of
**SHERIFFS &
POLICE CHIEFS**

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WASPC POST LEGISLATIVE SESSION STATEMENT

(Lacey, WA) --- The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) appreciates the consideration of public policy legislation in the 2023 session. WASPC had four priorities for this session.

Drug laws

The legislature did not pass meaningful policy reforms on this important issue. After more than a year of discussion and diligent work, a workable measure was not approved. We supported policies to provide incentives that encourage drug rehabilitation and treatment while holding those who are in unlawful possession of drugs accountable in a compassionate manner. We supported the bill as it passed the Senate as it was a balanced approach to incentivize those found in possession of drugs to successfully complete treatment. In return, those individuals would not have a criminal record and not spend any time in jail following conviction. Only those who refused treatment would be subject to serving any time in jail. The result of no action means there is no statewide policy on this issue. Local governments will have the ability to enact policies and ordinances for their communities to break the cycle of drug abuse, provide help to individuals in need, and take back our public spaces.

Pursuits

There were necessary adjustments to laws related to the pursuit of suspects. SB 5352 addressed many law enforcement and community concerns and we are pleased the governor plans to sign the legislation. However, more work will be needed to address community concerns regarding crimes such as motor vehicle theft, organized retail theft, or residential burglary.

Recruitment and Retention

We are disappointed more was not accomplished to provide funds to recruit and retain additional officers for Washington communities. For more than a dozen years, Washington has had the fewest law enforcement officers per capita, ranking 51st in the nation. In 2021, that ratio declined even further. We need to act quickly to catch up with the growth of our region. Every community deserves a public safety agency that is well-trained, well-equipped, and well-staffed to deliver the best public service.

Juvenile Justice

Legislation that supports positive intervention between our communities' kids and law enforcement was not addressed in the 2023 session but we hope to see more progress on this issue going forward.

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. WASPC will continue to work with legislators to find common ground to prepare for additional legislative action in the future.

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