Washington Association of
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Greetings from Your Executive Director:

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First and foremost, as the memorials for Sheriff Brett Myers and Lincoln Co, MT Deputy Terpsma have concluded, the memorial for Spokane Co. Deputy Sheriffs Perry and Acheson will be held on Wed., Nov. 18 at 3:00 PM at the Spokane Arena. The donations page is again posted in this newsletter. It's a lot and I know that as we work through this together, our ability to check in on each other continues to be a strength. As you take care of your teams, your families, and yourselves please know we all appreciate what you do!

Many thanks for those of you who were able to attend our conference recently- here is a reminder that the materials and presentations are available on the WASPC conference app. Go to the "past" tab under agendas and the materials will be found under each session.

Clemency and Pardons

A recent Seattle Times article criticizing Governor Bob Ferguson for declining a number of clemency recommendations, and a subsequent letter from an inmate raise an important question: What is the proper role of Washington's Clemency and Pardons Board? As someone who served on the board from 2014 to 2018 (as an appointee of Governor Jay Inslee, by the way), the discussion is focusing on the wrong issue. The question is not whether Governor Ferguson is approving enough recommendations. The question is whether Washington will preserve a clemency process that is balanced, disciplined, and faithful to its intended purpose.

The board serves a valuable role. It reviews applications, hears from victims, offenders, family members, and advocates, and evaluates whether extraordinary circumstances exist that may justify relief. But the board's authority ends there. Its recommendations are advisory. The Governor is the decision-maker. That distinction is not a flaw in the system; It is one of its most important safeguards. When I served on the board, our members came from diverse professional and political backgrounds, including law enforcement leaders, prosecutors, and others with differing perspectives. Despite those differences, we approached cases through the same lens: fairness, accountability, public safety, and whether a case truly presented exceptional circumstances.

Our role was not to advance a political agenda, advocate for a particular outcome, or second-guess every sentence imposed by a court. Our job was to identify the rare cases that might warrant consideration and then provide a recommendation to the Governor. Clemency overrides the judgment of a sentencing judge, effectively revisits the work of prosecutors and defense attorneys, and alters a sentence imposed through a constitutional process that often includes a jury's verdict. It should be

exercised very carefully and sparingly, and that is what the Governor is doing. Clemency exists as an extraordinary safety valve, not as a routine mechanism for revisiting criminal sentences.

I am deeply troubled by suggestions that any Governor should simply defer to board recommendations. Governors are elected statewide and are accountable to the public for decisions affecting both justice and public safety. They have an obligation to independently evaluate every recommendation. The board serves the public best when it acts as a source of balanced counsel rather than as an advocate for a particular outcome. Likewise, the public is best served when their Governor thoughtfully and independently evaluates each recommendation rather than engaging in symbolic gestures or blanket grants of clemency.

Along the same line, here is a paper form Univ. of Pennsylvania Professor Dr. Jerry Ratcliffe about the hypocrisy of using minimizing language for people engaged in criminal behavior with the simultaneous use of demonizing language when referring to law enforcement. It permeates academia and the media, with "police killings" used alongside "those impacted by the criminal justice system." It's a quick read, and also Dr. Ratcliffe is scheduled to speak at our Spring Conference in May 2027 in Spokane. He will discuss evidence-based policing and the use of data to make the best policy decisions for public safety.

WADEPS/Data

Washington State University and Dr. Makin have included this as part of the WADEPS data being compiled and it includes NIBRS data. I will get more info (it was only sent out today) but wanted to send now and will provide feedback when I get it.

Malcolm Gladwell Book

I don't often write about a book, but I do want to recommend "The American Way of Killing" by Malcolm Gladwell. I don't agree with everything in it, but it is getting a lot of attention and discussion, and Gladwell is a high-profile, best-selling author who is viewed as pretty progressive. Many in your community will read it, it provides some discussion opportunities, and it speaks directly to something we have been advocating for years: America is not overpoliced, it is massively under policed. Here is one of the main points of his book: *The prescription for fewer murders, violent crime and gun deaths is not "defund the police" and not "tough on crime." It is "more police, fewer prisons, fewer arrests, and more violence prevention." In other words, more police, better deployed, with fewer arrests and less reliance on imprisonment, can reduce violence more effectively than expanding prisons.*

Gladwell repeatedly points out that Americans often frame public safety as a choice between more police or less police. He argues that the real comparison should be police officers vs. long-term prison confinement. His contention is that the United States has chosen to build an enormous state and federal prison system instead of maintaining a sufficiently large police presence. European nations spend similar public resources on safety but allocate more of those resources toward police personnel and far less toward incarceration. He also points out that violence prevention is different from crime control. Property crimes such as burglary, theft, and auto theft do not differ as dramatically between the United States and peer nations. Homicide and serious assault do. For Gladwell, America's problem is not unusually high criminality. It is unusually lethal conflict.

Why does Gladwell agree that more police can mean fewer arrests? To the public, this is one of his most counterintuitive arguments. Most people assume: more police = more arrests. Gladwell suggests the opposite may often be true. With more officers, workloads fall, officers are less stressed, have greater discretion, gain local knowledge, and problems are managed before becoming crimes. The result, according to Gladwell, is better police-community relationships, fewer arrests, less imprisonment, and lower violence. In this sense he sees proactive community-based policing as an alternative to incarceration rather than a pathway toward mass incarceration. Gladwell often emphasizes stress, workload, fatigue, and poor organizational conditions as contributors to bad police outcomes. Here is an Atlantic magazine article summarizing the book.

He goes on to suggest that police presence matters (not a shock to us but it will be to many readers in the public). Gladwell argues that violence decreases when officers know people, places, disputes, and neighborhood dynamics. He frequently invokes principles associated with Sir Robert Peel, emphasizing prevention rather than reaction. In this framework:

- Officers should spend less time racing between calls.
- Officers should spend more time learning about neighborhoods.
- Fewer incidents should end in arrest.
- More incidents should be resolved before they become violent.

That's what all of us, including WASPC, have been saying for years. We sent around this article back in 2019 to legislators as they were busy creating counterproductive reform laws that increased crime and reduced the number of officers. As we begin to recover from that train wreck, Gladwell's book supports the main idea: more police = more safety (and not more incarceration).

Again, we all see this as law enforcement administrators, but here is a mainstream progressive author saying it loudly. This is precisely that intersection between public safety, wellness, and reducing negative contacts. If politicians can get out of their respective corners, there is a lot on which we can agree.

Standing Together to Support the Families of Fallen Deputies

When law enforcement officers put their lives on the line to protect others, their service and sacrifice deserve to be remembered and honored. Following a tragic shooting in South Spokane County, two Spokane County Sheriff's Deputies were fatally injured in the line of duty. Both deputies also served their country through the U.S. Army National Guard. The Sheriff Community Oriented Policing Effort (S.C.O.P.E.) is accepting donations through the S.C.O.P.E./SCSO Memorial Fund to help cover funeral expenses and provide support to the deputies' families.

Here's how you can help:

• Canopy Credit Union: Visit any branch and request to donate to the S.C.O.P.E./SCSO Memorial Fund.

• Phone Donations: Call 509.328.2900 or toll-free at 1.800.541.4310. Transaction fees have been waived.

• Check Donations: Drop off checks at any Canopy Credit Union branch, Spokane Valley Police Department, or Spokane County Sheriff's Office.

• Venmo: Donate directly at https://lnkd.in/gdTzPzPN

Every contribution, regardless of size, makes a difference in supporting the families during this difficult time.

Let us come together as a community to honor their service, remember their sacrifice, and stand beside the loved ones they leave behind.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the deputies, their families, and the entire Spokane County law enforcement community.

Thank you for your generosity, compassion, and support.

Thanks for all you do and stay safe! Steve