



Washington Association of

**SHERIFFS &
POLICE CHIEFS**

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Greetings from your Executive Director:

Here are a few updates and I hope your summer is going well—

Safe Supply

Recommendations from the [Substance Use Recovery Services Advisory Committee \(SURSAC\)](#) about “safe supply” have been published. “Safe Supply” is one of the more extreme versions of “harm reduction” and an inevitable result of taking the concept as far as it can go. Harm reduction starts with reasonable elements like making sure people have housing, and taking reasonable efforts to reduce mortality among illicit drug users (e.g., Narcan availability). Our behavioral health programs have supported, and advocated, for housing and access to treatment, but WASPC has opposed the most extreme versions of harm reduction, and “safe supply” is one of them.

The [recommendations](#) had a pre-set outcome when the legislature heavily weighted the committee with advocacy groups. WASPC is frequently added to committees like this to provide the impression that “law enforcement was included,” but our recommendations and opinions, and those of Sheriffs and Chiefs who are members, are frequently disregarded. In this case, the law enforcement representative was Whatcom County Sheriff Donnell Tanksley, who has made very clear he does not agree with “safe supply” and did not agree with the committee’s recommendation.

SURSAC’s recommendation includes government sponsored, tested and supplied illicit drugs, in order to ensure quality of product and reduce adulterated drugs and deaths. SURSAC previously voted to recommend decriminalization of drugs in 2022 and have now determined that the next step must be a safe supply so that individuals may continue use without fear of contamination and harm. As the authors note, they expect this system to reduce harms of overdose and incarceration to users, but do not acknowledge any other “externalities” that result from such a move.

The recommendations also include language about what the state can do to alleviate the financial loss for drug dealers. I am serious. I encourage you to read the document (it’s just a few pages) and talk about it with your local decision-makers and legislators. When the Blake decision came down in 2021, there was a bill (HB 1499) to completely decriminalize drugs in our state, and it had already been passed

Serving the Law Enforcement Community and the Citizens of Washington

by the House Public Safety Committee. This type of idealistic and far-fetched proposal has been introduced before, and (my opinion) is the product of echo chambers that do not reflect real life or what voters and the community want.

[Here](#) is a very good column opposing this idea. No one wants anyone to die from an overdose, but our state has tried and failed at so many of these well-meaning efforts. Speaking to how these work, and don't work, in the real world is always going to be important.

OII (Office of Independent Investigations)

OII has issued the final investigative [update](#) and the [full public report](#) for an incident occurring January 12 of this year in Centralia. These are public and are attached for your awareness and information.

Leading Through Intense Times

That brings me to more examples of “politicians have a right to be wrong.” Seattle PD has to go begging for [drones](#) to facilitate officer protection on an armed standoff because of hasty decisions made years ago based on political pressure. In [Minneapolis](#), after the police department responded to a call for assistance with crowd control and officer safety from ICE, as people surrounded an operation based on incorrect social media messages, five candidates for Mayor of that city answered “yes” when asked if they would “hold the Chief accountable for working with ICE”.

Local law enforcement leaders need to continue to be the adults in the room. The most recent polling on trust in [institutions](#) shows trust in law enforcement is significantly higher than the media, politicians, and the criminal justice system overall.

Protests and the Rule of Law

This week, we sent out this [statement](#) about better differentiating between lawful protesters and those who show up to create conflict, assault officers, block exits, and commit illegal and dangerous acts. Too many conflate Constitutionally protected protest with agitators and extremists and it does not serve either the lawful protesters or law enforcement who are sworn to protect both those rights and public safety.

This week there were [federal charges](#) files against people who blocked exits and disobeyed lawful orders during an ICE protest in Spokane.

HB 2015

I understand that the Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC) has brought on a program manager for the reviews required for eligibility for grant funding and the subsequent local option sales taxes in HB 2015; they sent out a survey this week and if you did not receive it please let them know. This week I received a question from a Sheriff about my overall take on this bill; here it is summarized:

First, some agencies are choosing not to apply, both for the onerous requirements but also because they are doing OK on staffing already (this seems to correlate to community and political support within the jurisdiction, not surprisingly). Second, while we will again make clear we appreciate the Governor leading on this (it wouldn't exist at all without that), the bill is mostly smoke and mirrors and reflects the legislature being dragged kicking and screaming to pass this in the first place. I don't think it will make a significant difference in law enforcement staffing. One example is a link to a [story](#) this week about King County, where the comments from Council Member Dunn are pretty accurate. Any support in that county's sales tax increase for deputies will basically just alleviate projected layoffs, which of course is good but does not create an increase in staffing. While the article says "the council will later determine how to use the funds", they are telegraphing that they will use the expansive allowance in the bill for funds to be used for almost anything. As the article notes, "the tax proceeds can be spent on diversion programs, reentry work for those released from custody, community outreach and mental health crisis response. They can also be used for programs that "have a reasonable relationship" to reducing the number of people in the legal system, including by reducing homelessness."

It all comes back to a phrase you have heard from me frequently- "public safety is a core function of government". It should be funded that way.

WA State Supreme Court Rule Change

The State Supreme Court issued [this](#) rule change that provides broad discretion to Judges to simply dismiss cases. This was proposed by defense attorneys. [Here](#) is a link to the comments of opposition from many prosecutors as well as the Superior County Judges Association and the Municipal and District Court Judges Association. Please make sure your legal counsel is aware of this change.

We have seen increasing and persistent changes to court rules and sentencing laws in this state and others. As we have mentioned before, WASPC and our partners at WAPA, the Prosecutors Association, are often among the few voices opposing some of these changes. These changes lead to very real

outcomes and this past week was a reminder. When I was a young patrol officer in Minnesota, there was a notorious and very heinous crime that occurred about an hour south of where I worked. A teenager had killed his entire family with an axe. I knew the deputy who first went to the house on what was called in as a routine welfare check. He told me, his voice cracking, about what he began to find, how he got on the radio and said, “send God and everybody...”, and how the effects of what he had seen would stay with him forever. That state, because of law changes led by advocacy groups, will be releasing the [killer](#), in the next few months.

We are not reflexively against rehabilitation at all- our goal is fewer victims. If offenders embrace evidence-based treatment, education, and programming that reduces their likelihood of future involvement in crime, potential release before the end of their sentence may be appropriate in specific instances. Unfortunately, in our state policy makers keep trying to pass legislation that simply lets people out of prison early, without sufficient requirements of rehabilitation or accountability measures for subsequent violations. That's why we keep opposing these bills.

As we hear about the victim impact statements and the sentencing of the killer in the Idaho case this week, we need to keep in mind that while Idaho will likely not create laws that will allow for his early release, our state is continuing to move in the direction of fewer consequences. We continue to raise our hand and oppose these changes. While sentencing is not the main mission or responsibility of WASPC, we will continue to focus on victims and the families affected by crime.

Special Olympic Torch Run

Marysville Chief Erik Scairpon provided an update and thanks for this year's [Special Olympics Torch Run](#):

Special Olympics and the 2025 Torch Run, from Chief Erik Scairpon

This year's Law Enforcement Torch Run® for Special Olympics Washington (link PDF) was a powerful tribute to unity and inclusion, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of Special Olympics Washington. More than 250 law enforcement officers ran more than 200 miles across the state, participating in 15+ Torch Run legs and 10+ Community Runs before lighting the flame at the Spring Games Opening Ceremony at Cheney Stadium.

Thanks to your support, we surpassed our fundraising goal of \$35,000 — fueling the mission to empower athletes with intellectual disabilities. Whether you ran alongside athletes, presented medals, organized events, or proudly wore the LETR shirt, your dedication keeps this movement strong. We extend heartfelt

*thanks to the 50+ participating agencies across Washington who helped make the 2025 run a success.
(Full list included in attached document we had sent out previously.)*

Still want to join the movement?

- Commemorative dri-wick shirts are still available: [Order Here](#)
- Learn more or get involved: LETR@SOWA.ORG

Here's to the next 50 years of inclusion, dignity, and respect.

Passing of former Moses Lake Chief Fuhr

We sent out a [GTWO](#) about Chief Fuhr's passing, including information about the service, but I also wanted to share [this story](#) from Columbia Basin SourceOne News.

Finally, as our Wellness Committee continues to build an executive peer support program, [here](#) is a good article from Police1 about the burden you each carry. Please know we are here to support you and your family.

Thanks for all you do and stay safe- Steve