



Washington Association of **SHERIFFS & POLICE CHIEFS**

2026 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

JAIL STANDARDS AND FUNDING

Jails have a constitutional and common law duty of care for those in their custody. While there has been significant state interest in jail operations over the previous several years, systemic state support for jails has not existed since 1977 with the enactment of the City and County Jails Act. The City and County Jails Act established statewide jail standards and full funding from the state to comply with those standards. Statewide jail standards expired when state funding for jails to meet those standards was eliminated. While jails no longer operate under statewide standards, they continue to operate under local jail standards as required by law.

Local jails have and are struggling to provide medical care (including but not limited to traditional health care, mental health and addiction treatment) to those in their custody. The inability for medical professionals to obtain liability insurance to care for the incarcerated has resulted in near elimination of the provider market and unsustainable costs for the few remaining provider(s) willing to deliver care to the incarcerated in Washington. Similarly, jails have been the target of tort claims with increasingly unsustainable awards.

WASPC seeks to enact legislation that establishes statewide minimum standards of care for those incarcerated in jail, provide ample state funding for jails to meet those standards, to improve the availability of medical providers to care for the incarcerated, and to mitigate financial incentives associated with tort claims against jails.

HELICOPTER OPERATIONS FUNDING

Law enforcement aviation support services are provided to every jurisdiction in the state -free of charge - by four counties (King, Snohomish, Chelan, and Spokane). Air support units are invaluable resources in many search and rescue missions, missing persons, and other community caretaking and lifesaving functions of law enforcement agencies. Air support units can also be used as a vehicular pursuit alternative in some instances and provide crucial officer safety and public safety functions during certain high-risk incidents.

WASPC seeks to establish an ongoing state funded grant program to provide \$10 million per year to:

- **Provide a base amount of funding to local law enforcement air support units that agree to assist any law enforcement agency in Washington when available; and**
- **Provide a per-mission reimbursement when a local law enforcement air support unit is deployed on a search and rescue mission.**

LAW & JUSTICE DAY

FEBRUARY 3, 2026

9 AM | COLUMBIA ROOM

JAMES MCMAHAN

Policy Director | james@waspc.org

Leading collaboration among law enforcement executives to enhance public safety since 1963.