



Washington Association of
**SHERIFFS &
POLICE CHIEFS**

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Greetings from your Executive Director:

Here are a few updates as we head toward the end of the year—

Crime Stats/Solving Crimes and Reporting

Every year, the [House Community Safety Committee](#) holds a pre-session hearing about crime trends, and for the last several years has brought in academics and researchers from the east coast to testify, along with WASPC and others to talk about overall crime trends. You may have seen the [coverage](#) about the hearing which included [this](#) story saying “police are failing to solve violent crimes” in our state, as well as other states. This is combined with stories like [this one](#) reporting that arrests are “falling to historic lows”. Crime stats, the FBI database, the numbers we report out each year, and differences between UCR data and cumulative data used by some of these researchers and bloggers are all different and sort of mind-numbingly confusing. Here is some information just so you have a feel for how it’s being used and in case you want to discuss it with your community or policymakers.

The current narrative is that crime is way down and we don’t have to worry about public safety anymore (yes, I am exaggerating but I am sure you’ve seen some of that). At the same time, we also see incidents of underreporting and using crime data in ways that either support or belie the narratives. During the hearing, Marshall Clement, director of the Council of State Governments Justice Center, [cited](#) rates from the FBI data; however, if he is using data from the FBI Crime Data Explorer, these are numbers based on UCR/NIBRS and clearance rates are not related to solved crime.

There is also a slide that references “solve rates”; the article he is pulling the data from is referencing “clearance rates” and the source is the FBI, indicating that it is UCR/NIBRS information being used. The [Reason Foundation](#) defines clearance rates as: “clearance rates measure the percentage of reported crimes that result in a suspect being arrested, in an attempt to approximate the effectiveness of police agencies....” According to WASPC’s Criminal Justice Information team, this is incorrect partly because clearance rates are based on arrests or exceptional clearances during the current year but could be for incidents reported from previous years. These crimes could be from previous years and solved or closed in the current year. By citing a “solve rate” as a percentage of solves or closed cases compared to crimes committed in the current year, we are really comparing apples and oranges. A UCR clearance is based on

reported arrests or exceptional clearances only - it does not mean there is a final disposition on a case, the case is unsolved, or the case is no longer under investigation.

[Attached](#) is a brief explanation of clearances in UCR/NIBRS.

Also relevant to the topic of reported crime vs. actual crime is [this report](#) issued a few months ago by the National Retail Theft Association. Here are a few takeaways from 2024 data from private retailers:

- The majority (64%) of retailers say that they reported less than half of their store related theft incidents to law enforcement. Retailers state a variety of reasons for not reporting store-related theft. Lack of law enforcement response and dollar loss that's either too low or below felony thresholds top the list.
- Retailers are limiting who can approach and/or stop an individual suspected of shoplifting amid increasing concerns about the safety and security of employees.
- Almost half of respondents (46%) saw increases in guest related violence and violence during a crime (including shoplifting).
- In 2024, nearly three-quarters (73%) of reported shoplifters were exhibiting heightened levels of aggression and violence. **There has not been significant improvement since** (their emphasis). While 17% report shoplifters are exhibiting somewhat less aggression and violence compared with a year ago, the vast majority (83%) of respondents say that levels of aggression and violence are the same or higher compared with last year, and;
- 35% say they've experienced labor challenges due to the violence-related theft in their stores.

Hiring and HB 2015

CJTC sent out some updates on their application process, but my understanding is that a more comprehensive set of changes is forthcoming. I am not aware of any agency that has been approved for either grants or taxing authority.

OII

[Here](#) is the press release from the Office of Independent Investigations (OII) about adding Pierce County as another region.

Corrections

This [article](#) recently highlighted a significant overdose event at an Idaho jail. What's rarely mentioned in these stories is the stress and effect on corrections staff. Our partners working in jails do a tough job and just want to go home each night safely and make sure those held in jails are also safe. The line that really caught me was "they were revived before jail staff moved to treat more inmates who were showing signs of

overdose."

This happened in Idaho, but the staff of our 59 local jails in our state and our state Dept of Corrections teams face the challenge of trying to screen and keep out potentially deadly substances like fentanyl every day. And, like your teams, they too will be working during the holidays. They deserve our thanks.

Victim Justice Coalition

I am sharing this at the request of Tiffany Attrill with the Victim Justice Coalition for you to share as appropriate if you wish:

As the 2026 legislative session approaches, crime victims and survivors remain dramatically underrepresented in Olympia, especially when critical public-safety bills are being debated. To ensure that survivor voices can meaningfully shape policy, the Victim Justice Coalition (VJC) is offering focused, trauma-informed Legislative Advocacy training for those wishing to learn how to engage in the legislative process.

Sunday, January 11, 2026

1:00 – 4:00 PM

Online (virtual)

Invite-only, registration required. REGISTER HERE: <https://forms.gle/nixGzVsFgxkDYcJi8>

This training is designed for crime victims, survivors, family members, and victim advocates who want to learn the basics of the legislative process, how to register positions on bills, how to sign up to testify (in person or remotely), and how to deliver effective testimony, including introductions and time limits.

It is imperative that lawmakers hear directly from crime victims and survivors as they shape and vote on legislative policy. Last session, more than 30 organizations were present in Olympia representing offender-focused interests, while crime victims remained largely absent from the conversation. Now is the time for victim advocacy organizations to unite and ensure that survivor perspectives are heard. Survivor voices provide critical balance to offender-focused advocacy and are essential to creating laws that truly reflect public safety, accountability, and justice.

Please reach out if you have any questions - victimjusticecoalition@gmail.com. We look forward to partnering with you in elevating survivor voices in Olympia.

With respect and gratitude, Tiffany Attrill and Natasha Willson, Victim Justice Coalition

Statewide Wellness Challenge

The 2026 Statewide Wellness Challenge begins on January 12th. You can't win prizes and bragging rights if your agency doesn't participate. For more information, visit the [webpage](#) and designate your agency POC [here](#). Thanks!

Law and Justice Day 2026

Mark your calendar for February 3 for our annual Law and Justice Day at the Capitol. Details will be sent out as the event gets closer.

Finally, the past few weeks have been very challenging for many of you with flooding, levee breaks, and other extreme weather impacts. We had the devastating news of Trooper Guting's passing. I've heard from Chiefs and Sheriffs about how proud you are of your teams and the work they do at times like this. Please know it is our honor to work with and for each of you as you lead through these times, and all of us at WASPC wish you are your families Safe and Joyous Holidays!

Thanks for all you do- Steve