



### **Greetings from your Executive Director:**

This week's newsletter is focused on key questions that demand answers about public safety in Washington.

- Are we okay with the current direction on public safety, and is this the best we can do?
- Can our elected leaders find bipartisan leadership to move this state forward on balanced public safety, or not?

We continue to work toward answers that protect victims, recognize the needs of the community and keep the men and women in law enforcement supported.

### **Officer Assaults**

There have been four ... four!... Washington law enforcement officers shot this month, in Pasco, Everett, and two with the King County Sheriff's Office. I [spoke on KIRO Radio](#) about the King County Deputy assisting in an eviction and we have also provided a "running total" of assaults on officers in our state which includes [2022 numbers](#) as of now, and comparing the last several years of assaults on officers in our state. For 2022, we are currently showing a 20% increase in assaults on officers.

### **Legislative News - Pursuits**

The legislature is considering some fixes to the pursuits bill and the Blake bill (two of the key areas related to increases in crime, disorder and chaos in our public spaces). The current legislative "vehicle" bill on the pursuits issue (SB5352) has a very restrictive bill title which narrows what can be changed, and is likely the only real option for any change this year.

We sent a [letter](#) to legislators last week (which led some legislators to express frustration with us). As we stated in the letter and in our communications, we support the bill as certainly being better than current law, but insufficient and may not reduce the "get out of jail free card" dynamic that fleeing law enforcement has become.

In addition to frustration with law enforcement, the major issue remains that many are under the impression that the current law's reference to allowing pursuits for "violent crime" means all violent crime- which it does not. The legislators who voted for the original bill may have thought it included all violent

crime, but this is not what the law says, and our letter points that out.

Here is a [one pager](#) that further explains this problem. As we saw in HB 1054 and HB 1310 from 2021, there were differences between what the legislature intended and what they actually wrote into law. We continue to see some irritation directed toward us for pointing this out. We were not substantively included in discussions on the original bills, did not support the original bills, and will not be pushed into “going-along-to-get-along” because of the public safety concerns we have raised for several years. There are very difficult decisions for our legislators to make, and there are strong disagreements within the parties. We continue to advocate for bipartisan leadership, and balanced laws that respect both public safety and victims.

Some of the key support for changes has come from Mayors. Last week, Lakewood Mayor Jason Whalen wrote in the [Tacoma News Tribune](#) that their community’s data does not say “we are safer because of changes to pursuit laws. It shows the opposite.” The Mayor goes on to write:

*The Lakewood Police Department is one of the few agencies in the state that started tracking data around the pursuit law. We tracked data 18 months before it took effect and in the 18 months that followed.*

*Here’s what the complete Lakewood police data shows: Before the legislation restricting pursuits (HB 1054) took effect, Lakewood police saw an average of three vehicle pursuits per month. In the 18 months since, that number is now an average of two pursuits a month. A negligible decline. However, Lakewood has experienced a 700% increase in the number of instances of people eluding — or fleeing — officers. That means they take off, typically at high speeds, putting our community and themselves in danger. Our officers can’t follow except in limited circumstances. Vehicle thefts doubled. Notably, the number of collisions that occurred during stolen vehicle recoveries quadrupled since the law took effect.*

There was also some media coverage this past week about a report from the [National Insurance Crime Bureau](#) (NICB) that shows Washington rose to #3 nationally in the number of stolen cars. Remember, this is just the total number, NOT per capita. The only states ahead of Washington, which has a population of 8 million, are California with 39 million and Texas with 30 million. Washington State had more stolen vehicles in 2022 than the states of Florida (22 million), New York (19.6 million), Illinois (13 million), and Ohio (11.7 million). The only state with a larger increase, year-over-year, Illinois, also had significant police reform laws passed in 2021, with large and controversial bills passed to almost immediately change some of the bills originally passed. The result? More crime and fewer officers, and remember that Illinois had higher numbers of officers per capita than Washington State (which we can say about every other state, considering our state is 51st in the nation).

### **Legislative News – Blake**

There may be attempts to water down the Blake bill in the House, to reduce criminal consequences and possibly reduce treatment options and resources. The Blake bill fix this session was entirely discussed and negotiated in the Senate. Senators approved a pretty good, balanced bill for this complex issue that

provides for treatment as the center, while including necessary incentives for those who refuse, with many offramps to treatment at each stage.

Further reductions of incentives are not acceptable. Reductions will likely result in a continued rise in problems with our public spaces, too many people supporting a drug habit through retail theft and stolen cars, and too many of our neighbors dying of overdoses. This week, the [Seattle Times Editorial Board](#) published support for Seattle City Attorney Ann Davison's program that includes detention for chronic offenders and the resulting reductions in crime. Their concluding paragraph summarizes where we are in our state with fixes to our reform laws and Blake:

*Jail isn't the answer to Seattle's public safety challenges. But neither should it be disregarded. The City Attorney's Office is right to say more treatment and other services ought to be offered in detention, because many people won't participate if given a choice. Restoring public confidence means establishing consequences and doing so with compassion. This is how Seattle will become a safer city.*

Let me repeat that: *Restoring public confidence means establishing consequences and doing so with compassion.*

#### **WSU – COVID Study**

Many of you responded to a request from our partners at Washington State University for their study on organizational responses to Covid. The study has been completed, and Dr. Makin and his team sent the [study](#) for your information, along with their sincere thanks for your assistance.

#### **Wellness App**

Finally, I wanted to share the good news that as of now, the Wellness App that many of you have implemented, which is coordinated through WASPC, and funded by the legislature, has gone live! This week I saw this quote which I thought about in terms of both the agencies dealing with their officers and deputies being shot, and shot at, and the need for ongoing wellness support:

“The mind doesn't forget what the eyes have seen.”

Click [here](#) for more information on the Wellness App.

#### **BLEA Graduation**

This week I attended the BLEA Graduation at the Criminal Justice Training Academy, where I was joined by several Sheriffs and Chiefs in congratulating WASPC Member and King County Sheriff Patti Cole-Tindall as she fulfilled her commitment to complete the full academy training. Sheriff Cole-Tindall is congratulated by Chelan Co. Sheriff Mike Morrison, Redmond Chief Darrell Lowe, Clallam Co. Sheriff Brian King, and I following the ceremony.



As I saw the graduates from all over our state complete their initial training, I could not help but think about the tragic school shooting in Nashville this week. Officers of that agency, who were on routine patrol one minute and faced with an active shooter the next, ran to the sound of the gunfire, engaged and stopped the threat. As I watched the ceremony, I knew that our newly sworn-in agency members would each say, "Send me".

As your teams, and you, leave your families each day for work and all the things we are handling, please know we support you and, as always, thank you for all you do.

Stay safe- Steve