



Washington Association of  
**SHERIFFS &  
POLICE CHIEFS**

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**June 28, 2024**

**Greetings from your Executive Director:**

As noted in a GTWO Friday 6/28, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Grant's Pass' ordinance prohibiting outdoor camping in public spaces does not amount to cruel and unusual punishment. The full decision on Grants Pass v Johnson is [here](#). The decision was in keeping with the amicus brief submitted by WASPC and other "friends of the court" and holds that enforcement of those ordinances does not violate the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and gives local governments more authority on the issue. WASPC's amicus, authored by our counsel, the Smith Alling firm, is specially cited on pages 3 and 10 of the formal Supreme Court opinion.

Here is the Associated Press coverage of the [decision](#). [Here](#) is a statement WASPC has prepared in response to media inquiries about the decision. Please inform your legal department of the decision.

**Statewide Policy**

The Seattle Times ran [this editorial](#) along with video segments of each of the top-polling candidates for Governor regarding public safety issues, and WASPC provided the editors with key public policy positions for their candidate interviews. We are quoted in the editorial and our position on the need for more officers is deemed a priority.

WASPC has repeatedly said we need balanced public safety policy that brings people together and supports officers doing the job so they know what's expected of them, and we frequently point out that extreme and counterproductive efforts at reform have set back improvements in the system, created an environment of brazen criminality, and resulted in disastrously low police staffing levels. [Here](#) is a really timely article from the Atlantic magazine that examines the intersection of politics and public safety, and how California has seen many of the same dynamics as Washington State. Here is an important excerpt by a person who considers themselves progressive:

*...he would try, like many...to think of crime as 'structural', flowing from societal forces such as poverty, inequality, and racism, rather than the product of bad choices freely made by individuals. But the window-smasher 'doing his thing in broad daylight', close enough to make eye contact with those too*

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*fearful to stop him, 'appears to have not just agency but a bubbling surplus of it'.*

Criminologist Peter Moskos points out that people "want to and even enjoy playing by the rules, and expect things to go well if they do, so unshameful (sic) public rule-breaking bothers people viscerally..."

Finally, the author summarizes, "Outrage politics proved a poor foundation for lasting criminal justice reform. A movement powered by outrage turned out to be too unfocused to identify the most prudent reforms, and too radicalized to avoid overreach," and that it "fuels maladaptive responses."

"The issue for most people isn't whether something is up or down by 10%. It's that they are seeing randomness and brazenness, and getting a sense of lawlessness," said Adam Gelb, the president and CEO of the Council on Criminal Justice, a nonpartisan think tank.

There it is, no matter your perspective, a need to stop the outrage politics, that fuel bad policies and result in bad outcomes. People are rightly fed up with brazen criminals and they want more officers, providing good, fair and transparent policing. This will continue to be a strong focus for all of us.

## **Vehicle Theft**

Lakewood Sgt. Jeff Carroll runs the Puget Sound Auto Theft Task Force (PSATT) which works, and is partially funded, with the Washington Auto Theft Prevention Authority (WATPA). Working with WATPA Executive Director Bryan Jeter, Sgt. Carroll has noted some declines in auto theft numbers in Pierce County while overall thefts have gone up statewide, and we asked him his opinion on what factors were driving the decline. His response, included below with his permission, is worth reading to see how these factors may help each of us drive down auto thefts in our area:

From Sgt. Carroll:

*I believe the decline particularly in Pierce County over the last several months is due to a couple of reasons.*

*The "Kia Boyz" phenomenon started to affect our area in the fall of 2022. It started out as juveniles stealing cars to show off and get social media notoriety. Then they realized that it was pretty easy to get away with it. All they had to do was flee. If they did get caught they were not booked into juvenile detention as it was viewed as just a property crime. The no consequences led to stealing more cars and committing other crimes such as thefts and burglaries. Again, no consequences and they started*

*committing more violent crimes such as armed robberies, strong arm robberies and drive-bys. Some of these groups were likely stealing 15-20 cars a week. We would often figure out they were driving 2 or 3 stolen vehicles around shopping for others to steal. In late 2023 this started to catch up with them. A few were unfortunately killed in car crashes, a couple were killed by related gun violence, and a few more were arrested for multiple felonies. I think the "fun" was also wearing off. I am hopeful it has peaked and will not peak again.*

*Second, local law enforcement has started to get their staffing back up and this is helping with more visibility and more follow up to investigations. We also had a couple of prolific auto thieves arrested or killed in late 2023 and early 2024.*

*I do think the task force has played a role in the trend. We have done quite a bit of outreach with social media, community events and provided agencies with brochures, posters and training. The monthly emphases usually get some media attention. They also give us an opportunity to share information and show patrol officers and deputies how to build stronger cases.*

*Just keeping the conversation alive has helped folks think about auto theft and how it leads to other crimes almost every time.*

*As far as the past year or so worth of emphases, we generally get one or two firearms seized/recovered each time (5%) and warrants are pretty common (about 75%). Warrants run from possession of stolen vehicle to general theft, burglary, Assaults, DV related crimes and drug related warrants.*

**Also:**

We plan to release the statewide crime statistics with the publication of the annual Crime in Washington Report on July 9. The report will go out that morning to each of you and we will do a public event later that day.

Congratulations to Union Gap Chief Greg Cobb, who has been appointed by WASPC President Redmond Chief Darrell Lowe to take a vacant WASPC board position. We look forward to working with Chief Cobb as he takes on this leadership position.

Have a safe week, and thanks for all you do--- Steve