



Washington Association of
**SHERIFFS &
POLICE CHIEFS**

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Greetings from Your Executive Director:

As we head into summer, I want to share a few updates:

You may be aware of the *Estate of Choi v. City of Lakewood* case, which is now before the appellate court. This case could have significant implications for liability related to law enforcement responses to domestic violence incidents. For those interested in following the case, here is the City's [Appellant's Brief](#), the [Respondent's Brief](#) filed by the plaintiff's attorney, and the WASPC [Amicus Brief](#).

Also attached is the Emergency Management Council's [Annual Report](#). Thank you to Puyallup Chief Scott Engle, who serves as WASPC's representative on this important statewide council.

Round Two of the HB 2015 grant program opens July 1. You can access application information [here](#) and [here](#) is additional information along with a list of jurisdictions that have been approved.

You will also find information on the new Blue Envelope Program [here](#) for neurodivergent drivers, which was authorized by the legislature last year to help improve communication and interactions during traffic stops.

There are proposed Washington court [rule changes](#) regarding bail requirements. In our view, these changes will have unintended consequences that negatively affect public safety. [Here](#) is WASPC's comment letter submitted to the court, along with feedback from the [Association of Washington Cities](#).

Speaking of court rules, recent media coverage has [highlighted](#) an increase in the dismissal of serious criminal cases due to a shortage of available [defense attorneys](#) as new caseload standards are phased in. This is precisely the concern WASPC [raised](#) when we opposed the new standards. In our comments, we stated: "*As this proposed rule change progresses, we fear that the predictable result will be a significant drop in the number of available public defenders and a cascading effect of courts that have little choice but to dismiss cases due to a lack of counsel.*"

These standards were proposed by defense attorneys, endorsed by the Washington State Bar Association, and adopted—with some revisions—by the Washington Supreme Court.

To be clear, every person accused of a crime is entitled to constitutional protections, including the right to counsel. At the same time, Washington has significantly expanded the categories of individuals eligible for state-funded legal representation over the past several years. For example, in 2021 the legislature expanded the right to counsel in eviction proceedings through SB 5160. That same year, the Youth Access to Counsel law was enacted, requiring youth to be provided access to legal counsel regardless of the wishes of the youth or their parents.

Meanwhile, the state continues to underfund many aspects of the criminal justice system. New limits have now been established for defense attorney caseloads, but there are no comparable limits on prosecutor caseloads or on the volume of 911 calls and reported crimes that law enforcement agencies must respond to. The result is a growing bottleneck in the justice system that risks delaying or denying justice for victims.

In late July, we expect to release the 2025 Crime in Washington Report. I expect it will show reductions in many major crime categories, which is encouraging news. Changes in pursuit policies and other public safety initiatives may have contributed to some of these positive trends. However, even as we celebrate progress, we cannot lose sight of the ongoing need for adequate staffing and resources throughout the criminal justice system. We need enough police officers, deputies, prosecutors, corrections professionals, professional staff and yes, defense attorneys, to ensure accountability when it is necessary. If crime trends are improving, that is not a signal to step back from attention to public safety—it is a reason to continue building on the momentum that is producing results.

Thank you for all that you do. Stay safe, and Happy 4th! - Steve