



Washington Association of

**SHERIFFS &
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Statement attribution:

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**Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs
Statement on Upholding the Right to Protest and the Rule of Law**

Our nation and the state of Washington have a proud history of public engagement, civic participation, and robust debate. The right to protest, peacefully and lawfully, is foundational to our democracy and enshrined in the First Amendment. Whether the cause is popular or contentious, residents have long exercised their right to assemble and make their voices heard. Law enforcement across Washington is committed to protecting these constitutional freedoms while adhering to the core values of the rule of law, public safety and constitutional rights.

At the same time, we must acknowledge a concerning trend: lawful demonstrations are occasionally disrupted by individuals or groups intent on provoking conflict.¹ These incidents, often instigated by those not aligned with the organizers' original intent, jeopardize public safety and undermine the legitimate message of the protest.

Law enforcement officers are duty-bound to safeguard both the public's safety and their constitutional rights. This includes ensuring that lawful protests can occur without interference, while also responding decisively to acts of violence, vandalism, or intimidation that threaten others' safety. Blocking emergency access, trapping individuals in public buildings,² or assaulting participants, including officers,³ crosses a line that must not be ignored. We categorically condemn attacks, and any kind of violence directed against law enforcement officers.

We urge media outlets, public officials, and the broader community to draw a clear distinction between lawful protestors and those who exploit protests to engage in unlawful activity⁴. These distinctions matter, both in how the public perceives demonstrations and in how we work together to ensure safety and accountability for everyone involved.

The challenges surrounding protest events are complex and often reflect deeply held beliefs. Residents and leaders will continue to raise issues, including opinion about federal enforcement of immigration, and push for open, public, legal review under the rule of law. Our commitment remains steadfast: Washington's locally accountable Sheriffs, Police Chiefs, and their teams are here to serve with fairness, professionalism, and a firm respect for the rights of all people. We will continue to protect the right to speak out, peacefully and lawfully, while upholding the public trust and the rule of law.

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¹ [Some far-left groups have encouraged peaceful protests to turn violent, experts say](#)

² [Tukwila police fire pepper balls on protesters at unusual ICE check-in | The Seattle Times](#)

³ [10 arrested in connection with Texas detention center shooting that was 'planned ambush,' U.S. attorney says](#)

⁴ [As pushback grows to WA immigration court arrests, ICE changes tactics | The Seattle Times](#)

Leading collaboration among law enforcement professionals to enhance public safety.