

WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF SHERIFFS & POLICE CHIEFS

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Serving the Law Enforcement Community and the Citizens of Washington



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Greetings from your Executive Director:

Here are a few updates as we head into the weekend- hope everyone had a great 4th!

First, an **update on CJTC and the lengthy wait for classes**- we have mentioned this almost every newsletter because we know it is a major issue for our members, and is having a serious negative effect on your operations. A few weeks ago I mentioned that we are pressing every button and applying all the pressure we can to get some resolution- I just wanted to clarify that we understand that CJTC is doing everything they can to add classes, it's just a matter of money and we need to do something to increase the funds for the short term. As I have mentioned before, we need to assist CJTC next legislative session to work some sort of permanent "fix" to the funding process and provide the necessary funding to deliver enough classes for the projected number of applications rather than just waiting until after applications are received and it's too late in the legislative session to add the needed classes. It's a little like a school district, if they have incoming students beyond the projected number, "well, we can't take you, come back next year and we'll consider some added funding." Recruiting good people is hard enough without making them delay their career for several months.

The decision makers for any short term fix and emergency funding, to be specific, are the Governor's Office and the Office of Financial Management. Those are the groups we continue to work on, and to let them know the impacts these delays are having on our members.

Since 2014 CJTC has been raising the issue of BLEA funding and they have been in Olympia during every legislative session meeting with legislators about the funding issue. They have created documents each year for "Law and Justice Day" so that WASPC members can deliver a clear and consistent message. These same documents have been used by many of the lobbyists for the cities and counties. For three years in a row, CJTC took the risk of delivering BLEA classes in *anticipation* of supplemental funding that wasn't approved until after the training had been delivered.

The bottom line with BLEA funding is a simple math problem. The academy is getting approximately 540 applications per year. They can manage 30 recruits per class. It takes 18 classes per year (18x30) to keep up with that demand. The amount of funds provided seems to be sufficient only to keep the wait time under 6 months, and that has proven to be a problem when there is unpredictable demand or a need to get people in sooner than 6 months. So, again, this is not WASPC's direct responsibility, but we will continue to put pressure on the Legislature (for the long term) and Governor's Office and OFM (in the short term) to give CJTC the funding they have been begging for and to fix the very broken process for funding BLEA.

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The next update is on **firearms background checks**. There are some potential changes coming up, both in terms of responsibilities falling on our departments, and possibly legislative interest in going to a “single point” background system. Let me give you a little information on both. There is nothing urgent here, but I want all of us to understand the issue and to start thinking about what we think will work best:

We were notified recently of a potential change to how NICS conducts firearms background checks that may have a substantial effect on you and your department. The bottom line is that NICS (which is the federal database run by the FBI) has let WA State know that at some point, they intend to no longer do NICS checks for Firearms dealers (FFLs) for handgun purchases with CPLs (Concealed Pistol Licenses). This means that there will be a workload impact on your records staff, as you would need to process pistol transfer applications with CPLs the same as those without, and it may mean a more restrictive system for purchasers, delays for CPL holders purchasing a pistol, and added pressure on our agencies as dealers are on a 10-day “clock” for the backgrounds. I have spoken to a few of our members and have been advised this will have a significant effect on workloads and deadlines for our staffs.

Here is the current system, just for understanding of how this all works: The State of WA is a “partial point of contact” state, where purchasers of long guns are checked through NICS, and handgun purchasers are checked through the NICS system at the dealer’s place of business, then by local departments.

NICS, citing workload issues, has announced they will no longer do these “courtesy” checks for handgun purchases with CPLs. So, at this point, all of these (and a large number of purchasers have CPLs) will go to your department. NICS has effectively made their workload issue your workload issue. Your records staff will now do the NICS check, to include any research on potential prohibitive information, along with the other checks they are already doing, and if all purchases must await the local background check, your “10 day clock” pile will grow substantially. This change to the process will add the NICS query to the local agencies’ process and agencies may have to research an open case if there is one on the criminal history. This may also impact agencies on appeals of denials, since the denial will no longer be coming from the NICS but from the local department.

The change was originally going to occur this fall, but after some kickback from us and asking a lot of questions, as well as involvement of the Governor’s Office, any change has been delayed out to at least June of 2019. So, that’s the good news- but we will need to keep an eye on this as ultimately NICS can change the policy if they choose.

On a related note, this issue has accelerated conversation and interest among some legislators and the media to look at a **“single point” background system**- similar to what many states have. This means all backgrounds and transfers would go through a single state agency. Local agencies would no longer do background checks or be responsible for the paperwork. There are pros and cons to this change, and WASPC has not taken a position on this topic- but I am letting you know it may come up, so feel free to share your opinion with a board member or myself. It is also possible a change could be made that places all background responsibility back on local agencies- so even long guns would go through local departments. We will likely be talking

more about this at upcoming legislative committee meetings. Questions? Let me know and I'll do my best to answer it.

In the last newsletter we mentioned the **Janus decision** coming from the US Supreme Court- the Association of WA Cities is holding a webinar on July 18 about what this may mean to our cities and counties- here is the link and they invite any of our members to sign up:

<https://wacities.org/events-education/Upcoming-AWC-events/events-details?ID=1778>

Finally here is a link to an article in the Seattle Times about how the **perception of crime in some neighborhoods does not match the data**. This is similar to what many of us are seeing in terms of law enforcement generally- “gut feelings” and “what I heard”, exacerbated by social media and the echo chamber of people agreeing only with what they already think, creates a gap. And- my sense is that providing data to “prove it wrong” misses the point-- people will feel however they feel. The article contains this line: “... a number of factors contribute to this sense of fear, including reading or watching a lot of news, or hyperlocal websites like Nextdoor.com, where neighbors frequently post about crime. A person who is a high media consumer will believe the world is a much more dangerous place than his or her neighbor who is a low media consumer.” Think about how that statement is related to our challenge in an environment in which people use phrases like “police violence” to create an emotional and evocative impression on the consumer. This is the one of the challenges we face--

<https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/mean-world-syndrome-in-some-seattle-neighborhoods-fear-of-crime-exceeds-reality/>

Have a great weekend!

Work Hard- Have Fun- Stay Safe

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