

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:

This week I will start with one more **update on I-940, the Deadly Force Initiative**. We still have not had a decision from the Supreme Court, but there may be one in the next week or so. WASPC is one of the designated authors of a potential “pro” statement for the alternative, agreed-upon version (HB 3003) if that is sent to the ballot. That is just one possible outcome of the court case, and we want to be ready. If you have any questions or need any more information, just let me know.

Some of you are familiar with a deputy-involved shooting involving the King County Sheriff’s Office that has received a great deal of attention in the media and community. This week, **KCSO sent out a [press release](#) as well as the [entire Use of Force Review Board findings on the incident](#)**, and it was sent to the media, in the interest of transparency. I have attached both for your information. The issue of how to improve our collective response to these types of incidents and the concern in the community is, obviously, top of mind to many of us. As Executives seek to improve and reflect on best practices and what changes we may contemplate in the future, these documents may provide some real-time information of how one department is dealing with it. Many thanks to Sheriff Johanknecht and Chief of Staff Liz Rocca for allowing us to send it out.

One of our Big Themes has been the use of **law enforcement as a political football**, and how this is not serving public safety or victims of crime. A tragic but illustrative example is found this week in the case of the **murder of Mollie Tibbetts** in Iowa. She went missing, and law enforcement made an arrest and recovered her body. The suspect is reported to be an undocumented immigrant. The story has quickly spun, in the media and social media, into:

- “This proves all immigrants are dangerous and we have to build the wall!”
- Criticism of the Congress people and Senators who have sought to “abolish ICE”
- A Virginia Senate candidate called for ICE raids in Virginia, and a former ICE director said “this is why we need a wall”.
- Newspapers trying to find some way to distract from the immigration status- a headline within one day of the arrest pointed out “Suspect worked for a prominent Republican”.
- Criticism of media coverage- inviting comparisons to how the murder would have been covered if the suspect had been a white citizen with an AR-15.
- Immigrant advocates demanding “Don’t Go There!” and pointing out this was an act of an individual, not a community.
- Political strategists talking about using the name “Mollie Tibbetts” to help certain politicians in their run for office this fall.

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- A Twitter message from a person identifying themselves as a relative of the victim saying “hey i’m a member of mollie’s family and we are not so f--ing small-minded that we generalize a whole population based on some bad individuals. now stop being a f--ing snake and using my cousins death as political propaganda. take her name out of your mouth.”

And on it goes. There has been little coverage of the two things that are far more important in this case: first, the fact that the life of **a young woman was ended violently by a criminal**, and there are real crimes and really bad people out there who need to be found and arrested by law enforcement doing good work; and second, the real story here is **a good comprehensive investigation between local law enforcement and ICE**. ICE was able to assist with suspect information. That does not mean that efforts to limit ICE access to information for civil matters or deportation is wrong, it just means we have to remember that we should not be hurting efforts to investigate and arrest anyone, including undocumented persons, who commit violent crimes. While acknowledging the divide and disagreement about immigration policy between our federal and state governments, let us remember that **law enforcement is serious business, with real victims and a real need to get the right information**. As we continue to try to thread that needle between the posturing and political back-and-forth between the federal government and our state, we need to stand up and point out that public safety is what matters and victims need to be heard. There is very little attention being paid to that right now.

An interesting element of the immigration battle being played out now is that it is also highly dependent on building and perpetuating fear: fear of immigrants (with sensational examples and stories) and fear of ICE (with advocates leveraging the fear for undocumented persons and using rhetoric with the public like “babies ripped from the arms of their mothers”). Social media continues to exacerbate fear and create emotional reactions based on fear. Here are three examples of how this atmosphere is playing out and the “outrage” clickbait culture is affecting perceptions, affecting public safety, and being leveraged politically:

<https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2018/08/23/doorbell-camera-videos-ring-police/1000358002/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/23/opinion/stranger-fear-children-kidnapping-india.html>

[Study: Teens’ growing worry about discrimination associated with increased smoking, drug use, depression](#)



The takeaway for me is that we need to continue to press for solutions that bring us together, not further divide us, and we need to keep saying that public safety and victims matter, and we will stand up for both. Recognize and call out people and media that leverage fear and sensationalism that reduce public safety.

Finally this week, my wife sent an email to a colleague and received an “out of office” reply back. This is just about the coolest “out of office” I have ever seen:

Hello:

I am out of the office until September 11. I've gone to the North Pole. Well, not exactly the North Pole, but I will be darn close to the Magnetic North, on board the National Geographic Explorer. I

will check email to the extent the grid allows.

Have a good week-

Work Hard- Have Fun- Stay Safe

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