

WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF SHERIFFS & POLICE CHIEFS

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Serving the Law Enforcement Community and the Citizens of Washington



March 1, 2019

Greetings from your Executive Director:

Yes, it has been another very busy week as James, our Policy Director, and our staff work long hours as the legislative session rolls on. As I have mentioned to many of our Chiefs and Sheriffs, the overall zeitgeist of the legislative world right now is about placing greater “guardrails” on law enforcement, releasing people in prisons, and a general lack of interest in victims or public safety. You frequently hear the phrase “those impacted by the criminal justice system”, which is intended to imply that there is no responsibility for the actions that led to prosecution in the first place, and ignores the victims of the criminal act itself. While this continues, we are seeing some success in sending a strong message in support of victims and public safety- so let’s get started with a few updates:

We will start with Senate Bill 5819:

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=5819&Year=2019>

This bill creates an **early release board**, by moving the Indeterminate Sentencing Review Board to the Governor’s Office, and would create an **automatic review and release system for most crimes for anyone who has served 15 years**. In other words, with the exception of aggravated murder and Murder 1 (which were originally in the bill but recently removed), any offender, for any number of offenses, including murder, rape of a child, aggravated assault, and child molestation, would presumptively receive a hearing for release after 15 years. The basic, and perfectly understandable, rationale for the bill is that if we want offenders to rehabilitate themselves and be “reformed”, we need to allow them a mechanism to earn that release. However, as is pointed out in the testimony, we already have that mechanism- the Clemency and Pardons Board.

I have attached a video link for the bill as it was heard in Ways and Means on Feb. 28. The link is cued up for the start of the bill, and WASPC’s testimony starts at 3:29, and John Carlson, who was an advocate of the Three Strikes initiative many years ago, testifies at 3:47:

<https://www.tvw.org/watch/?clientID=9375922947&eventID=2019021580&startStreamAt=11716&stopStreamAt=13947&autoStartStream=true>

It is worth noting that Crime Victims groups really did not show up, but individual victims, and those affected by violent crime, did show up. Their testimony was very effective. It would appear that a focus on victims and public safety was a strong message and this hearing is a great example of our important role in Olympia, particularly on bills like this. As we specifically point out in WASPC’s “Principles for Community Trust”:

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Reform in the criminal justice system should be based on public safety outcomes and should not ignore concern for law enforcement, victims of crime, and justice.

Our testimony on this bill reflects that core principle.

Many of you have expressed concern with a set of **proposed court rules, forwarded by the Washington Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers**, that would place significant restrictions on investigations. With a great deal of excellent input from many of our members, we have completed and sent the [attached](#) letter opposing these proposed rules to the Washington State Supreme Court. Feel free to use any and all of this to communicate your feelings to the Court in your role as a Law Enforcement Executive if you wish.

As you know, we have been working to raise the issue of **illicit marijuana operations and the intersection of black-market marijuana** as the regulated market continues to develop- first here is a link to a story from California that echoes many of the same issues we have seen here in Washington:

[California's black market for pot is stifling legal sales. Now the governor wants to step up enforcement](#)

Last week the Seattle Channel did a program on the topic and we urged legislators, as they consider adding legal home grows, to pay attention to the illicit market and the experience of other states:

<http://www.seattlechannel.org/CityInsideOut?videoid=x102183>

Here are three links to stories that really speak to the **honor and work of law enforcement officers**-- the first was sent to me by WSP Chief Batiste, who pointed out how powerful something as small as being that positive role model can be for kids:

<https://wtvr.com/2019/02/18/c-b-fleming-video/>

The next two are about the reality of what officers face, and how hard they work to save lives in difficult circumstances, including a story from Auburn PD:

[Dramatic video shows officers race to save 3 who allegedly overdosed on fentanyl](#)

<https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/new-video-shows-auburn-police-officers-saving-mans-life-with-narcan/911726491>

A few weeks back I mentioned that **social media presents a huge challenge** for us to communicate effectively with our communities- I received this reply from Chief Rafael Padilla at Kent PD and their experience is instructive for us in terms of the way they are communicating:

Thank you for the update. I couldn't agree with you more on the social media challenge.

We have gone away from traditional email media releases and send our media releases exclusively via social media. We have even adopted the media's practice of creating provocative headlines that frame the message from our perspective. The days of sitting by and being professionally neutral (just the facts)on messaging are over for us.

More and more departments are communicating directly with their communities through social media, and as Chief Padilla points out, limiting the “filter” or “spin” that can alter that message. The Dept. of Justice Department publishes the [Strategic Communication Practices: A tool kit for Police Executives](#), which says “*No longer must law enforcement rely on a reporter to tell its story. No longer must law enforcement complain that its many positive stories do not receive coverage. No longer must a response to a recent editorial go unpublished. Today, departments can cover themselves. And they should.*”

Finally, last week we mentioned that we are **putting together a workgroup on getting some facts and providing some guidance on upcoming I-1639 workload**. Here are the details:

WASPC is putting together a workgroup to discuss the passage of I-1639 and changes to the NICS background check process. The workgroup meeting has been scheduled for March 12 from 9-12. The Workgroup meeting will be held at the WASPC Office located at 3060 Willamette Drive NE, Lacey, WA 98516. We will be in the WASPC Training Room located on the first floor of our building.

In preparation for the meeting, please send a list of questions your agency has concerning the passage of Initiative 1639 and upcoming changes to NICS background checks. Please also send any questions you have received from FFL partners and members of the community. Please send the questions prior to the meeting as this will help us use our time more efficiently. During the meeting, the group will be working to identify if these questions have been addressed by another agency. For the questions that have not been addressed, we will attempt to identify resources to address those questions.

Please let Jamie Weimer, jweimer@waspc.org, know if you plan to attend the meeting. Jamie will send additional information, including call in information for those wanting to participate by phone.

Thanks for everything you do and have a great weekend---

Work Hard- Have Fun-Stay Safe

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