



Washington Association of
**SHERIFFS &
POLICE CHIEFS**

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Greetings from Your Executive Director:

We have many items to cover this week - for the past several weeks we have been compiling **weekly statistics** and have asked agencies to voluntarily provide data to better track crime trends during the public health and economic crisis. Joan Smith and her staff from WASPC have been putting these together the past few weeks and we appreciate those agencies who have helped us out. Generally, the big picture is that theft and burglary are down while domestic violence is up, which is generally what was expected.

At the same time, we are all mindful of the fact that the stay-at-home orders and changes, nationwide, have produced some interesting outcomes as far as data and whether it reflects what is really occurring. For example, Emergency Room admissions for non-COVID problems have plummeted nationwide- and many ER doctors are perplexed. In other words, heart attacks and strokes that came in before are not anymore, perhaps because people are afraid of catching the virus, or because they think they cannot go to the hospital, or maybe what had manifested as a heart attack is being labeled as something else. Also, child abuse and neglect reports are way down- but of course, teachers, counselors and others who made reports before no longer have that contact. It does not mean child abuse and neglect have, in fact, gone down. So- we all know that there are unreported issues going on and there will be downstream effects. To that end, Spokane has sent flyers out to homes in their city to offer services regarding underreported domestic violence. Here is a link to the [story](#), the [flyer](#) itself, and the [press release](#) sent out by Spokane PD.

As our **local jails have reduced populations** to handle health and COVID issues, we also know that some Sheriffs and Jail managers are contemplating adjusting admission standards as we move forward. As always, these are local decisions but be aware that Dr. Stern, who has been working with all of our jails around the state, is available along with our Jail Liaison, John McGrath, to assist in providing information about procedures as you make decisions about these factors. John's email is jmcgrath@waspc.org

WAPA, the Prosecutor's Association, issued a [memo](#) regarding the **Emergency powers of the Governor**. I am providing this for your information and for your counsel if it helps answer any questions.

The FBI issued their release today on [2019 Officers Killed in the Line of Duty](#). Police Week is coming up next week.

The Eastern and Western WA U.S. Attorneys sent along this [letter](#) expressing support from the Department of Justice for **Congress to expedite payment of PSOB** (Public Safety Officer Benefits) to law enforcement fatally injured as a result of COVID.

The **National Sheriffs Association** sent an interesting [link](#) that provides an overview of **what every state is doing as far as health numbers and what is open and what is not**. FYI only.

Here is a GREAT [story](#) from Q13 on King County Deputy Kristi Bridgman continuing her **commitment to Special Olympians even during the crisis**. Deputy Bridgman is exceptional, but she is not the exception in law enforcement- so many of our Officers, Deputies, Troopers and Corrections staff are doing things like this every day...

In the last newsletter, I provided a quick update on our third letter asking for **clarification of the "goons with guns" comment** from Representative Sutherland. We did receive an e-mail written response on Monday. Rather than summarize or characterize it, I am providing a [PDF](#) of the entire e-mail chain, so you can read it for yourself, starting toward the bottom. In addition, I will provide this [link](#) to the KIRO Radio interview the Representative did on April 21. The portion regarding law enforcement begins at about the 11:00 mark and I would recommend you spend the few minutes to listen.

Our message is, and continues to be, simply this: Disagreement with government policies is a valued and important part of our democracy. However, advocating violence against law enforcement in any way is wrong. It is unacceptable in any circumstance, and should be condemned in every circumstance. Period.

I am also attaching this [letter](#) to the Representative and this [letter](#) to the House Minority Leader that was sent by our law enforcement labor partners at WACOPS, for your information.

We are about two months into the **unprecedented changes brought about by the virus**, government orders, economic disruption, worry about family members, and the impacts on our families. Everyone, including all of us in law enforcement, feel those impacts. Law enforcement in Washington State has focused on education and engagement, with enforcement as a last resort. This unique pandemic challenge is a giant exercise in trust, and people are being asked to do the right thing -- and to exercise their personal rights and control in a very limiting environment.

Right now, there are a lot of people and groups who want to leverage this crisis. We saw advocacy groups using COVID to try to force the mass release of inmates, and demanding that the health and safety of inmates take precedence over the health and safety of the public. We have explored the issue of "wedge politics" before at our conferences and in previous newsletters. Fear sells. Fear motivates voters, increases fundraising, and gets attention. Fear gets "clicks" and advertising revenue. At a time when people are already anxious about their health, the future, their jobs, and unusual orders limiting their lives, fear is even more effective. **And we are in the middle - trying to keep the peace, and increase stability.** The VAST majority of people think this is a serious health threat, we need to be very careful, and there is still much we do not know. We cannot leave the economy at a standstill forever, and both Democrats and Republicans agree on that. No one wants to do this all over again. As Sheriff Gary Simpson said to me this week, "people are ready to do the right thing".

As we move forward, let's focus on that vast group that is ready to do the right thing. As Sheriffs and Chiefs, we lead, communicate, and make those tough discretionary decisions for both the

health and economic well-being of our counties and cities. People will be frustrated that they can't start their business as soon as they want. People will be frustrated that others who violate the orders don't have enough of a consequence. Enforcement might be necessary in some cases - and leaving it alone might be the better call for others. It's what we do, and have always done. We will continue to be dedicated to helping our communities get through this challenging time in history.

As always, it is my privilege to work to support you, and stay safe-

Steve