



Washington Association of
**SHERIFFS &
POLICE CHIEFS**

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January 22, 2021

Greetings from your Executive Director:

A lot to cover this week—

As your teams continue to respond 24/7 to handle complex calls, manage jails, and engage your communities during a pandemic, it has never been more important to acknowledge the challenges and remember to take care of each other. WASPC leaders have always worked for the best policies and outcomes for public safety. As I have said many times, the headwinds are strong, but we will continue to work for the best outcomes possible.

If you have signed up for the legislative listserv, you have received a great deal of information and new bills, literally every day. In the virtual environment this year, **direct outreach to your legislators** as well as the written testimony from WASPC policy staff and members is more important than ever. We have seen Sheriffs and Chiefs do exactly that and it makes a difference. We appreciate the work you do to help communicate to legislators.

Due to the intensity and frequency of legislative proposals, we will start to **conduct occasional webinars** where James and Sanjay can provide WASPC members with status updates. We sent a GTWO on this yesterday- the first virtual webinar will be held **Monday, January 25, at 6:00 PM**- here is a [link](#) to register.

I know it's short notice and evening meetings may be difficult for some but we need to work around the legislature's daily schedule of hearings and floor action. James and Sanjay will discuss the "Top Ten" issues and will provide status updates, possible changes, and what you can do as we move forward; we hope you can join us. The priority bills we will discuss are listed below, and [here](#) is a link to a PDF that has the bills, our written testimony, and hearings that have already been held.

HB 1054 – Tactics
SB 5051/ HB 1082 – Decertification
HB 1202 – Civil Cause of Action
HB 1203 - Community Oversight Boards
SB 5259 / HB 1092 – Data Collection
HB 1267 – Office of Independent Investigations
HB 1310 – Use of Force
SB 5263 – Felony Bar
SB 5066 – Duty to Intervene
HB 1088 – Brady Disclosures

Here are some potential points you can make to assist you to communicate concerns and feedback to legislators and others on these bills:

The men and women in law enforcement deserve support to do their jobs the right way, every day.

- Your locally accountable law enforcement supports meaningful policy reforms that improve public trust as well as public safety.
- Law Enforcement public policy reform must attract and support good officers who do their job the right way and increase public trust. Punitive changes and fostering “us vs them” divisions will result in less public safety for the communities we serve.
- WASPC has acknowledged, in 2019, the issue of institutional discrimination in criminal justice; just as there is in other parts of our society – housing, education, employment, banking/finance, etc.
- The laws and rules that govern policing are too important to be rushed. There is a lot we agree on – arbitration reform, decertification, tactical limits – but we need to make sure changes improve trust, and support those doing it right.
- Behavior health and substance abuse are major factors in what law enforcement faces each day, and they should receive the priority for funding and programs. Not every call to 911 needs to be answered by the police. Compassionate programs that stop crimes before they are committed are a solution on which there is agreement.
- People are looking for headway, not headlines. We need to come together for solutions.
- For the tactics bill: provide examples where this may create greater danger and reduce opportunities for de-escalation.

In addition, [here](#) is a WASPC pre-session statement and the short Public Policy Reforms video.

In our last newsletter, I sent along information on an “opt-out” system for vaccinations, which are decisions you make locally. [Attached](#) is a **sample form for opt-out** provided by Union Gap Chief Greg Cobb. As always, consult your legal counsel for how to best adapt this type of form for your department if you choose. Also, [here](#) is a COVID vaccination 2-page information sheet from the CDC.

Last week, the *Mercer Island Reporter* published an excellent [article](#) on **Chief Ed Holmes**, a former WASPC President. It is worth reading, and Chief Holmes is one of the many significant law enforcement leaders we have in this state.

Finally, WASPC sent this [letter](#) recently to our Congressional delegation, urging a **Congressional Gold Medal** be awarded to Capitol Police Officer Eugene Goodman. I understand that Officer Goodman escorted Vice President Harris to the Inaugural Wednesday.

Once again, it is our honor to serve you, and thank you for all you do---

Stay Safe,

- Steve

Steven D. Strachan, Executive Director
Washington Association of Sheriffs & Police Chiefs