WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF SHERIFFS AND POLICE CHIEFS
STATEMENT ON WASHINGTON STATE SUPREME COURT DECISION ON DRUG POSSESSION

(Lacey, WA) – The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) expressed concern today about the effects of the Washington State Supreme Court’s decision (State v Blake) that Washington’s statute criminalizing simple possession of a controlled substance is unconstitutional.

Our understanding is the (State v Blake) ruling in effect decriminalizes possession of illicit substances such as heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine, and unprescribed scheduled drugs such as OxyContin and oxycodone.

This is a significant and far-reaching change, and when combined with the Washington Legislature’s proposals for extensive changes to policing, sentencing, liability for officers, and removal of de-escalation tactics, we expect the changes will have real and substantial implications for public safety in our communities.

We urge our elected leaders to come together with all stakeholders and have meaningful dialogue to understand the cumulative effects and provide long-term planning focused on valuable and constructive public safety outcomes.

As we have long supported, we need a comprehensive and thoughtful system to address treatment and support for addiction, not decriminalization. Drug possession may often be associated with other crimes (burglary, theft, assault) and the criminal justice system has proven to be an effective mechanism to intervene.

We will continue to evaluate the impact of today’s ruling.

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About WASPC:

WASPC was founded in 1963 and consists of executive and top management personnel from law enforcement agencies statewide. With more than 900 members it includes the 39 elected county sheriffs, and 240 police chiefs, as well as the Washington State Patrol, the Washington Department of Corrections, and representatives of Tribal and federal agencies.

WASPC is the only association of its kind in the nation combining representatives from local, state, tribal, and federal law enforcement into a single body, working toward a common goal. WASPC’s function is to provide specific materials and services to all law enforcement agencies in the state, members, and non-members alike.