



## COMPASSION, COMMUNITY, COMMITMENT

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### **Statewide initiative launched to boost law enforcement applicants**

#### **Wear the Badge Washington focuses on the positive realities of a law enforcement career**

Olympia, WA - The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs ([WASPC](http://waspc.org)) today announced a new statewide initiative aimed at improving the recruitment and retention of peace and corrections officers and the overall perception of the profession. [Wear the Badge Washington](http://wearthebadgewa.org) will help Washingtonians explore the changing dynamics of a law enforcement career and give potential candidates and the public a better understanding of what it's really like to work as a peace officer in the 21st Century.

Locally and nationally, police departments large and small, urban and rural, are seeing a dramatic drop in the number of candidates applying for job openings according to WASPC, a statewide, professional member organization representing more than 300 law enforcement leaders in Washington. The profession struggles to attract individuals with diverse skill sets, backgrounds and experience.

According to a [survey](#) of by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), 63 percent of police departments in the U.S. say their number of job applicants has decreased. Findings from the Bureau of Justice Statistics indicate that more the overall reduction in police staffing is more than 10 percent over the past five years.

"As chiefs and sheriffs leading rural, urban and suburban departments, we have a common challenge and need to consider different solutions collectively," says Thurston County Sheriff John Snaza, president of the WASPC Executive Board. "Many smaller, rural agencies are concerned about losing veteran officers to larger departments. Larger agencies are experiencing increased retirements as baby boomers age. We are also struggling to attain gender and racial diversity in our departments."

The Wear the Badge Washington campaign will include a series of short, authentic video profiles or minidocumentaries of peace officers at work explaining why they chose to Wear the Badge in Washington. The videos, along with social media posts and career information, will be highlighted on [wearthebadgewa.org](http://wearthebadgewa.org).

"Police work still ranks high as an opportunity to serve and make a difference in your local community, said Snaza. "The Wear the Badge Washington campaign will hammer home that message and we hope to entice more Washingtonians to choose this honorable profession as their career."

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*Wear the Badge Washington is a program produced by the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs. Our membership includes sheriffs, police chiefs, the Washington State Patrol, the Washington Department of Corrections, and representatives of a number of 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.*