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Statement attribution:
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WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF SHERIFFS AND POLICE CHIEFS STATEMENT ON LEGISLATION TO ADDRESS THE BLAKE DECISION

(Lacey, WA) – The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) appreciates legislative efforts to correct the impacts of the recent state supreme court decision that Washington’s statute criminalizing simple possession of a controlled substance is unconstitutional.

We ask that the legislature address the problems the court decision created and direct more support for substances abuse prevention, treatment, and recovery. The legalization of controlled substances without substantial commitments to build and fund the infrastructure to address the root causes of addiction represent the worst of both worlds.

When it comes to substance use disorder, the primary tool that the legislature has provided to date is a criminal justice tool, and the Supreme Court took that tool away. It is now up to the legislature to decide what, if any, efforts will be made to combat substance use disorder, including simple possession, use, and the victimization and criminal behavior that is commonly associated with controlled substances.

In our opinion, the very least the legislature should do is amend RCW 69.50.4013 (1) to insert the word “knowingly” to address the constitutionality of the simple possession statute. The legislature, however, should not just take the easiest option available. While we are deeply troubled by the Court’s ruling, the legislature now has an opportunity to make meaningful improvements to help those who need help. We ask that the legislature take this opportunity to fix the constitutionality of that statute and also make prevention, intervention, and treatment services as available in the community as drugs are. The legislature should take the steps necessary to improve the lives of those who are suffering – to help those who need help.

WASPC stands ready to work with legislators to review, discuss and improve any legislation that seeks to achieve these goals.

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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

Serving the Law Enforcement Community and the Citizens of Washington
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.