



Washington Association of
**SHERIFFS &
POLICE CHIEFS**

3060 Willamette Drive NE
Lacey, WA 98516
360-486-2380 (Phone)
360-486-2381 (Fax)
www.waspc.org

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Greetings from your Executive Director:

As we head toward the end of 2020, here are a few updates:

WASPC's legislative policy recommendations have been out since May ([link](#)) and we have provided information and received feedback from the WASPC Board, Legislative Committee, and members. Our policy recommendations are based on thoughtful changes that recognize the need to balance changes with public safety. Our state's Sheriffs and Chiefs have been working on these changes for years, and we want common sense solutions.

There are also a number of other proposals and bills expected to be considered in the upcoming legislative session. WASPC's Legislative Committee Co-Chairs (Chief Craig Meidl, Sheriff John Snaza, Chief Mike Zaro and Sheriff Joe Nole) have scheduled a virtual briefing on these other law enforcement and reform measures- below is the GTWO that was sent in reference to this yesterday:

The 2021 legislative session will begin just over a month from now, and it has been widely acknowledged that law enforcement reform will be a major topic of discussion and debate. While WASPC has developed and continues to advance our 13 recommendations to improve the public service of law enforcement in Washington, legislators and advocates have been developing separate proposals of their own, and in conjunction with community groups.

WASPC has been regularly communicating with legislators and other stakeholders and has a general idea of what to expect in the upcoming session by way of law enforcement reform. The purpose of this meeting is to brief WASPC members on what we know, and to receive feedback from WASPC members on WASPC's response to these non-WASPC proposals.

You are invited to participate in a WASPC Legislative Briefing on Wednesday, December 16th at 4:00 PM. Click [here](#) to register. WASPC requests that only WASPC members who are employed by a Washington law enforcement agency participate.

The legislature and elected policy makers need to provide for change that balances reform *and* public safety, not solutions that potentially further divide, serve only to *reduce* trust, and cost our profession the very people we need the most right now. *Seattle Times* columnist Danny Westneat this week ([link](#)) outlined the challenges right now. As we advocate for positive change and highlight public safety and respect for victims, the column is helpful to understand the current political climate.

Speaking of challenges (which are not in short supply right now) many of our communities and counties continue to work through COVID-related restrictions, and businesses are trying to survive. Each of you communicates with your agencies and communities as you see fit, but I

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thought I would pass along a few of these concepts and statements recently highlighted by some of our Sheriffs and Chiefs. This is not a comprehensive list or set of guidelines, but rather a sampling of comments and perspectives in case any are helpful to you:

- We focus first on education and engagement, but as always, may use enforcement if necessary.
- We encourage people, including businesses, to do the right things to stay safe and keep themselves safe.
- Sheriffs and Chiefs use discretion for local enforcement, but do not control state licensing, or civil liability and lawsuits resulting from not following mandates.
- We will enforce any court order and support the rule of law.
- We are hesitant to arrest people trying to operate a business, and are mindful of potential impacts of arrests on jails while trying to manage COVID.
- At the end of the day, we are all trying to navigate this difficult time, and ask our communities and our businesses to show each other grace and compassion- we want everyone to be safe.

The Seattle media platform *Crosscut* recently published this [article](#) on the behavioral health system- it is well done and explains the challenges of what happens after the initial contact, as we talk about improving outcomes for people in crisis.

Here are two links to coverage of the co-deployed behavioral health teams with the Spokane County Sheriff's Office and the Spokane Police Department-- great examples of showing the community the results of these good programs.

1. [SPD: Officers see success in keeping people in crisis out of jails, hospitals - KXLY](#)
2. [City of Spokane Police Department - Posts | Facebook](#)

Also [here](#) is a particularly good story on Spokane PD and how they handled a theft of Christmas trees.

Finally, [here](#) is an excellent column that Port Angeles Chief Brian Smith wrote for the Peninsula Daily News-- a great message for the community.

Stay Safe and can't wait for 2021!!

- *Steve*

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