



Washington Association of  
**SHERIFFS &  
POLICE CHIEFS**

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**August 22, 2023**

**Greetings from your Executive Director:**

Recently the state law changed giving law enforcement tools to leverage people out of addiction and get them healthy and off the street. We want to thank the majority of bipartisan legislators, and Governor Inslee, for this much-needed change. Addiction and problems in our public spaces will continue to be a major problem, but now we have one more tool in the toolbox to help people.

The past few weeks have given us many examples of brazen criminals and the feeling that there are no consequences for criminal behavior. Whether it is people simply driving away from lawful traffic stops or the loss of perceived consequences resulting in more confrontations with law enforcement as seen in [this video of people jumping on a squad car](#). Additionally, [firefighters have come under attack](#) and have been [victims of theft](#) while on calls. [This story](#) from another state is a seemingly heartwarming story of an elderly lady helping an intruder, but also contains a less positive note:

*Perkins, who has become a bit of an international celebrity since the attack, said she still feels safe in the home where she's resided for 42 years, but worries about rampant crime. She said it seems to have gotten worse over the past few years and that criminals don't fear going to jail. "I think our law has just folded up," she said. "People aren't afraid of anything anymore. They feel they can do as they please."*

Two more examples illustrate this frustration expressed by members of the community. KIRO Radio's [Gee Scott said last week](#), "And I'm telling you right now, any politician in his town, anybody that comes forward with this, we don't need the police stuff. You can hold police officers that do the wrong thing accountable, and still understand the need for police officers... The people working in the grocery stores, the people in the community that live in that area, they're tired of hearing it. So, if you're a politician, quit trying to listen to the small minority of people. Quit trying to say the things that are going to get you elected or get you favor. Just do what needs to be done. If you really want to know what's going on, go and sit at the kitchen tables of some folks in the community, then you will find out what's really going on."

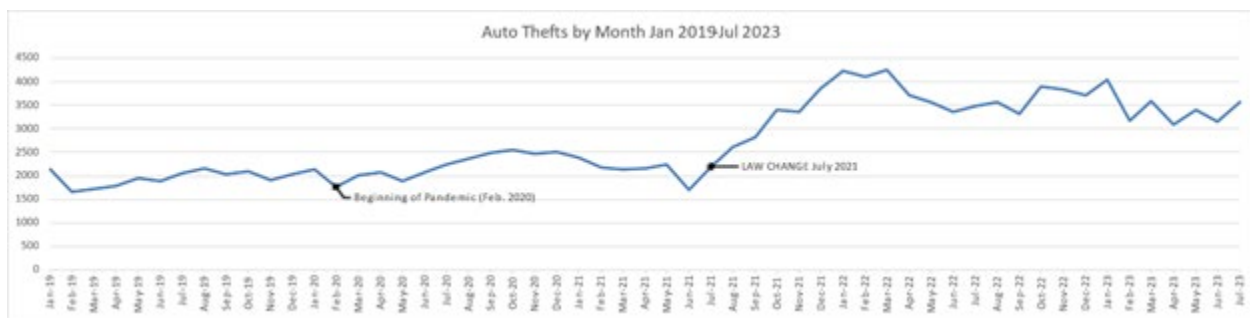
The Oakland, CA Chapter of the NAACP sent [this letter](#) which states: "African Americans are disproportionately hit the hardest by crime in East Oakland and other parts of the city." In our recent

***Serving the Law Enforcement Community and the Citizens of Washington***

2022 Crime in Washington report, page 21 shows how persons of color are disproportionately victims of violent crime. As we continue to collaborate with legislators to fix the 2021 reform laws for better public safety balance, we need to keep in mind that merely removing law enforcement from interactions and reducing the number of law enforcement officers and deputies, has a tragic and predictable outcome. We appreciate the leadership of those elected officials who recognize this problem and working with us to address it.

Finally, here is a recent academic study on the concept of “defunding the police”. The main points are that a) diverting calls for mental health will make little difference, b) there has been no real plan to provide for alternative provision of services, c) police still need to improve their responses to existing demands for service, and, notably, d) “Calls for defunding have been met by resistance, not just from law enforcement constituency groups and police chiefs, but also by communities with high rates of crime and poverty.” Lum (2021) has argued that the diversity of opinions about defunding among Black people living in high crime neighborhoods may not be fully reflected in these debates. A 2020 poll by Gallup’s Center on Black Voices found that 61% of Black respondents wanted police presence to remain at least the same in their neighborhoods, while an additional 20% wanted *more* police presence (as reported for Gallup by Saad, 2020).

We received the most up-to-date data on auto thefts in our state. There were 3575 vehicles stolen in our state, in July 2023. This graph shows clearly the immediate and long-term effect of the law changes in July 2021.



We can solve this problem- we are already working with legislators to further improve laws surrounding pursuits, criminal consequences, better staffing, and changing the environment of brazen criminality.

Speaking of auto thefts, a new WASPC podcast was posted featuring my discussion with Sgt. Jeff Carroll of the Puget Sound Auto Theft Task Force, about trends in auto thefts and what our task forces are doing to combat auto theft. The key factors to the increased auto theft trends as cited by Sgt. Carroll are criminals supporting drug habits, “Kia Boys” stealing and vandalizing based on social media

challenges, facilitating organized retail theft, and providing anonymity for other violent crimes. As he also points out, those most likely to be victims of car theft (people with older cars and trucks) are those least able to afford it.

You may have heard about the Johnson vs. Grants Pass, Oregon case. This case goes back a few years and is related to the *Martin v. Boise* case from the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit in which the court said governments cannot remove homeless persons unless there is adequate shelter to offer them. The Grants Pass case would expand that restriction to allow homeless persons to sue governments as a “class” for damages, which would further erode local governments ability to manage or take any action in regard to the issues we are seeing in our communities. We have been asked, along with many others, to file an “Amicus Curiae” brief, or friend of the court brief, to provide supporting information from our perspective that may assist the plaintiffs (in this case the City of Grants Pass). I have attached the [appellate case](#) on the issue. There was recently a decision made at the 9<sup>th</sup> Cir. Appellate level where they denied to review the case. The decision was very close among the Judges (even in the 9<sup>th</sup> Cir which, as you may know, is frequently overturned by the Supreme Court). The comments of the dissenting judges were pointed, and provide for good reasons to file a motion to get this considered by the U.S. Supreme Court. If this case stays as is, it would severely limit the ability of cities and counties to take local action. At the direction of the WASPC Executive Board, the association will be moving forward in joining with support of this effort to take it to the U.S. Supreme Court.

We have been keeping you up to date on the status of the Dept. of Commerce moving future Byrne JAG funds to a process which may result in less funding for existing drug task forces. This week, a bipartisan group of Members of Congress sent this letter ([link pdf](#)) to the Governor’s Office expressing their concern. The Dept. of Commerce has indicated they will ensure funding for task forces until June of 2024. We continue to work on this issue and have had productive discussions with legislators and the Governor’s Office about legislative funding for drug task forces. Here is a story highlighting the [Congressional letter](#). We will keep you advised as the issue progresses.

From the “Because we don’t have enough to deal with already” file comes [this story](#), highlighting social media “cop watchers” who monetize police videos for a living. I always think about an incident when I served as Chief when a person with behavioral health issues attacked and fought with one of our officers. As the officer lost his radio in the scuffle and was grappling with the large man, bystanders took out their phones and started commenting on how they felt about it. Only one man ran across the parking lot to assist the officer.

In our last newsletter we shared information about the Trueblood case and the state being further penalized for ongoing problems with handling persons with behavioral health restoration requirements. This week the state purchased a recently-closed psychiatric facility in Tukwila; interesting development and we will keep an eye on this issue.

The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) recently sent out this report on innovative ideas on recruitment and retention.

Some of you have asked whether the State's recent changes announced on vaccine mandates may affect instructors and others at the Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC). I received this communication about that question:

*On May 11, 2023, the governor rescinded Directive 22-13.1 ending the condition of employment related to COVID-19 vaccinations for state executive cabinet and small cabinet agencies.*

*Is there any COVID-19 vaccination requirement for state employees?*

*There are no requirements for state employees, contractors or volunteers regarding COVID-19 vaccination at executive cabinet and small cabinet agency worksites.*

*All agencies must continue meeting requirements and following guidance for keeping workers safe from COVID-19.*

*Offices of separately elected officials, independent agencies, boards, councils and commissions and institutions of higher education may choose to continue additional COVID-19 related measures.*

*When did the governor's directive end?*

*The governor rescinded Directive 22-13.1 on May 11, 2023. The timing aligns with the Biden Administration's announcement that the national COVID-19 public health emergency ended May 11, 2023, and the World Health Organization's announcement on May 5, 2023, that ended the global health emergency for COVID-19.*

*The WSCJTC has not continued additional COVID-19 related measures.*

Stay safe! Steve