



January 9, 2024

Greetings from your Executive Director:

Well, it's the new year and that means the legislative session starts this week. WASPC's weekly legislative briefings will resume this Friday, January 12th from 1230-1330, and will occur each Friday at the same time until the end of the session. Each briefing will be a relatively unstructured conversation where WASPC staff will inform members on the most pressing law enforcement issues in the Legislature that week and be available to answer questions and get input. WASPC intends these briefings for Active, Life, & Associate members only. If you have questions regarding your membership status or registration for these briefings, please email Rachelle Harwood at rharwood@waspc.org. **To register for the briefings, fill out your information here:** https://waspc-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_OPbtLF7USKekWhDN5GNbuQ

These briefings will be in addition to the information provided via the [WASPC Legislative E-List](#). To sign up for the Legislative E-List,

- Go to www.waspc.org
- Click the 'Member Login' button on the top right
- Enter your username and password and click "login"
- Click "My Profile"
- Hover your mouse over "My Features" and click on "E-lists" in the drop-down menu
- You will see there is one "E-list available to join." Click "Subscribe" next to the Legislative E-List.
- Check the "Email delivery" box, enter your email address, then click "save."

WASPC will also be updating the [legislative page](#) on the WASPC website with a report on the status of WASPC-tracked bills and an upcoming events report for WASPC-tracked bills.

Also, [here](#) is how you register to testify on a specific bill, and [here](#) is how you can "sign in" to oppose or support a bill.

By now you (hopefully) know our [2024 legislative agenda](#) focuses on three items. For each of these topic areas there is a link to "position papers" our Policy team has developed to assist you in communicating the issues. They also have a "Q&A" and please distribute and use the overall agenda document and position papers as widely as you wish:

[Further Fixes to Pursuit Laws](#) - Position Paper

[Amend the Juvenile Access to Attorney Law](#) - Position Paper

[Improve Recruitment and Retention](#) - Position Paper

WASPC has been championing efforts to obtain state funding to fund additional law enforcement officers for several years now. While legislation that we've had introduced has yet to gain any real momentum, the effort seems to be garnering more and more attention. We continue to hear state policymakers reference our staffing crisis, hear support to hire additional officers, and see more legislators introducing bills to provide resources to local governments to hire more officers. There are five (5!) separate bills that have already been introduced this session regarding funding for additional officers, and we were also pleased to see Governor Inslee's 2024 budget proposal include \$10M to the Commerce Department "for grants to local governments for public safety personnel, including recruitment and retention."

In addition to the bills from last year that carry-forward to this year, these are the five bills introduced in the last two days focused on law enforcement recruitment/retention:

[HB 2231](#), introduced by Rep Amy Walen (D-Kirkland) authorizes each city and each county to enact a 1/10th of 1% credit against the state sales tax. At least 50% of the funds must be used to recruit and retain additional law enforcement officers, and the remaining funds may be used for any criminal justice purpose.

[HB 2167](#), introduced by Rep Dave Paul (D-Oak Harbor) authorizes retirees, including law enforcement, who have separated from service for 6 or more months to enter into employment as a law enforcement officer or firefighter for up to 1040 hours per calendar year for 3 years without suspension of retirement benefits.

[HB 2202](#), introduced by Rep Travis Couture (R-Allyn) establishes a state-funded grant program "for distribution to local governments as financial assistance to support law enforcement and indigent public defense services."

[HB 2211](#), introduced by Rep Chris Stearns (D-Auburn) authorizes cities to impose, without a vote of the people, a 1/10th of 1% sales tax, all of which must be used for criminal justice purposes.

[SB 6090](#), introduced by Senator Jeff Holy (R-Spokane) establishes a state funded grant program “for the purpose of providing direct support to local and tribal law enforcement agencies in hiring law enforcement officers to increase community policing and public safety.”

We will go through the specifics of these at the Friday webinar as well.

[HB 2211](#), sponsored by Rep. Stearns, is the bill brought forward by the Assoc. of WA Cities and the City of Kent which differs in that the sales tax increase is an actual increase that raises taxes at the local level, rather than being a diversion of state funds. We also support this but prefer HB 2231.

You may have seen this [story](#) about the thoughtful and deliberate approach Portland PD has taken with changes to their pursuit policy, which has many parallels to the statewide restrictions and problems we have seen in our state.

At the request of the Attorney General’s Office, they have asked us to pass along this courtesy reminder about Your Use-of-Force Policy: [RCW 10.120.030](#) includes an ongoing requirement for agencies to submit an updated policy to the Attorney General’s Office within 60 days of modifying or repealing any sections related to use of force or de-escalation tactics. Submit your policy here: <https://fortress.wa.gov/atg/formhandler/ago/LawEnforcementUseOfForcePolicy.aspx>. This [website](#) shows the latest version your agency provided.

Many of our state’s task forces have already been notified that the Washington Department of Commerce is cutting their JAG (Justice Assistance Grant) funding, which we have mentioned before and had opposed. As also mentioned before, we are working with the Governor’s Office and legislators to “backfill” and get at least the same amount for these task force efforts, and hopefully more. It is not an absolute certainty but we are getting positive feedback and the Governor did include funds in his proposed budget. Stay tuned.

As the Office of Independent Investigations (OII) communicates its processes and the community continues to talk about transparency and investigations of incidents related to deadly force or deaths in custody, I would direct you to [this document](#) published last month by the State Auditor’s Office. The report provides an overview of the state mandated audits of Independent Investigations Teams (IITs). Page 5 contains this summary: *“Our audits have found that IITs and responding officers have regularly complied with the CJTC’s rules and best practices. They have also identified some areas of noncompliance, where documentation in case files can be improved, or where CJTC rules need to be clarified. We made the following recommendations to address common issues with conflicts of interest*

assessments, public updates, officer statements and investigator backgrounds.” In other words, the teams have been doing it right and there are few opportunities for technical and rules improvements. You may not have heard anything about this in the media because it does not support a negative narrative, but there it is. Facts and transparency are helpful, and the Auditor’s report makes clear that overall, they are seeing IITs doing it right.

Happy New Year and thanks for all you do! Stay Safe- Steve