



Washington Association of
**SHERIFFS &
POLICE CHIEFS**

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Greetings from your Executive Director:

OII

We look forward to seeing many of you at our fall conference next week. One session will feature an update and Q and A with the Office of Independent Investigations (OII), including IIT Team members and the concerns of local agencies, particularly for Region 1, where OII responses are scheduled to start Dec. 1. A few weeks ago, I shared [this letter](#) that had been sent from the Skagit Co. Prosecutor, and [here](#) is OII's response; both are shared with you with their permission and for your information only. As some of you continue to raise concerns with OII starting too soon, be aware that the progressive platform [Investigate West](#) is criticizing OII for exactly the opposite- being too slow. The task is a challenging one and we will pass along information as your agencies work through it.

Post-Election

We will have new administrations in D.C., and in Washington State and it's a good time to step back and see how these disparate outcomes actually have some overlap for public safety. A prominent progressive national strategist was [quoted this week](#) as saying that defund the police are "the three stupidest words in the English language." Here in Washington, many of the bills we will be fighting next session (from prohibiting low level traffic stops to consent decree authority for the Attorney General) are proposed by the [same groups](#) who have advocated for defunding the police. Even while our state did not "swing right" as some have said, we did elect a Governor who said loudly and clearly that he will pay attention to [public safety](#), and who pointed out that while we are last in the nation in police staffing, he "will fix it."

Public safety is a fundamental responsibility of government. However, the extreme policy shifts of recent years have often overlooked the voices of victims. Many residents want nothing more than to live without fear of crime, fear of violence, and fear for their children. In the election analyses the recently re-elected Congresswoman from Washington's Third District, Marie Gluesenkamp Perez, seems to be describing many of the ineffective and counterproductive public safety policies of the last few years when she [talked about](#) the "disconnect between what laws make for good reading on paper and what laws make for good policy in the real world." A commentary in the [Seattle Times](#) described elected officials "... presenting themselves as the champions of the underdog, (but they) have marginalized the largest underdog community of all — the workaday Americans who struggle to earn a buck, pay their bills and advance their personal goals."

We are seeing members of both parties, and elected officials in our state, agree that we need to pay attention to people who sometimes feel like suckers for paying their bills, following the law, and doing the right thing. Standing up for victims is why WASPC exists, why you all do the job you do, and what we will continue to do.

Immigration

For all the controversy of the last few years, confidence in of policing is among the [highest](#) of all institutions; much higher than the media or the criminal justice system overall. I recall when I was running for Sheriff in King County in 2012, I spoke to a group that advocated for Second Amendment

rights. A person asked me if I would “stand up and refuse to go door-to-door and take peoples’ guns when President Obama ordered us to confiscate them.” I explained that the essence, and the strength, of local law enforcement is that we are accountable and answerable not to the federal government, but to the Constitution and to local residents (the voters or locally elected officials like the Mayor). I think about that story because now, there will be people concerned that local Sheriffs Offices and Police Departments will be going door-to-door enforcing immigration laws or mass deportations at the “order” of the federal government. The concept is still the same, though the politics have changed; the federal government has no direct authority over local law enforcement, other than the limits of the Constitution, which describes what they can’t do, not what they must do. The outrage peddlers, on both sides of every political issue, will continue to try to get local law enforcement in the middle and create fear for their own monetary and political purposes. It is possible there may be requirements attached to future federal funding, as has always been the case, but those decisions to seek or accept funding will be made locally.

It is notable that the only real efforts to create greater federal control over local law enforcement have come in the form of consent decrees, as well as suggestions from [some academics](#) who in 2020 suggested that the federal government take over all policing. Next time we discuss higher levels of government taking over local control and accountability, or how academics have all the answers on law enforcement issues, remember that local accountability matters. As Sheriffs and Chiefs, within state law and the Constitution, you determine the priorities and practices of your agency-- and that is a very good thing.

Finally, I saw this quote again this week and it keeps coming back to me. For all the leadership classes I have taken in my life it all comes down to this: a reporter asked Gen. Colin Powell how he earned the trust of his soldiers. He said, simply, “A clear mission and values, training, and support. Please give them the resources they need to get the job done. Take the risks alongside your team.”

Have a safe week- Steve