



Washington Association of
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WASPC STATEMENT ON US SUPREME COURT RULING – GRANTS PASS V JOHNSON

(Lacey, WA) --- The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) respects the decision of the US Supreme Court in the matter of Grants Pass v Johnson. WASPC joined other law enforcement agencies in an amicus brief (friend of the court) seeking to overturn the lower court ruling on the issue of local jurisdictions' adoption of ordinances related to outdoor camping in public places.

WASPC believes local municipalities have the legal authority to pass ordinances that regulate the health, safety and welfare of their citizens and the expertise of how to best address the difficult and sensitive issues raised by increasing homeless individuals on the streets of those municipalities.

The Supreme Court's decision will hopefully lead us toward finding answers to homelessness and how to address its social, public health and criminal implications. Rather than engage in another round of "I'm right and you're wrong" we should make constructive change and do something about these problems. A good start would be to recognize there are numerous different pathways that lead to homelessness, and that criminal justice-based interventions, including the leverage of incarceration for criminal behavior can and should be a part of our conversation.

Contrary to a popular and misguided belief, law enforcement has no desire for mass arrests or filling the jails, nor are they ignoring obvious criminal behavior. Law enforcement is at the front line. In many communities in our state, the most compassionate, generous and helpful people working with homeless people are our law enforcement officers. They work diligently to offer and facilitate services, help people get on track, and in many cases, provide money out of their own pockets for those who genuinely need some support, and they usually do it without asking for any recognition or reimbursement.

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