

WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF SHERIFFS & POLICE CHIEFS

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Serving the Law Enforcement Community and the Citizens of Washington



September 28, 2018

Greetings from Your Executive Director:

I have an action-packed report for you this week. I will start with an update from our Washington State Sheriffs Association (WSSA) meeting which was held in Ellensburg earlier this week. I serve as the Executive Director of WSSA as well as WASPC, and because WSSA is funded through dues and, of course, Sheriffs are separately elected, their restrictions on expressing views on initiatives and ballot measures is different than WASPC. The **WSSA members passed two resolutions at their meeting** and I am outlining these below. It is important to note that not all Washington State Sheriffs oppose these initiatives, these are resolutions of the WSSA association as a whole:

- *The Washington State Sheriffs Association, at their Sept. 26 meeting, passed a resolution opposing Initiative I-1639. As the association representing the unique perspective of law enforcement leaders who have been directly elected by the residents of Washington's counties, we look forward to continuing to engage and play a part in any changes in Washington's firearms laws.*
- *The Washington State Sheriffs Association, at their Sept. 26 meeting, passed a resolution opposing Initiative I-940. We join other law enforcement groups in asking the legislature to pass the language contained in House Bill 3003, which was agreed upon by stakeholders from De-Escalate Washington and law enforcement. As law enforcement leaders directly elected by the residents of our counties, we will continue our commitment to increase trust with our communities.*

Language of I-940:

https://www.sos.wa.gov/assets/elections/initiatives/finaltext_1372.pdf

Language of I-1639:

https://www.sos.wa.gov/assets/elections/initiatives/finaltext_1531.pdf

Here is a link to a news story from a department where the executive got ahead of a very tough situation. Interesting case study to look at. One of my early mentors in law enforcement always said that when you have a bad situation, shine a light on it—the media is going to do it anyway and it will go on for days. If you get ahead and own it, people will generally appreciate the straightforward approach:

[Prince George's police chief does amazing thing: provides facts and apologizes for a mistake almost immediately](#)

President KEN THOMAS Chief—Des Moines	President Elect JOHN SNAZA Sheriff—Thurston County	Vice President CRAIG MEIDL Chief—Spokane	Past President BRIAN BURNETT Sheriff—Chelan County	Treasurer BRIAN WINTER Sheriff—Yakima County
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RICK SCOTT Sheriff—Grays Harbor County	MARK COUEY Director—OIC Criminal Investigations Unit	JOHN BATISTE Chief—WA State Patrol	JAY TABB SAC—FBI, Seattle	STEVEN D. STRACHAN Executive Director



This is sort of “inside baseball” but it’s a big deal- - WASPC’s **CJIS (Criminal Justice Information Services)** unit is the group that compiles crime statistics, publishes the statewide report, and forwards our state’s information to the FBI for the nationwide crime reports. As you may know, there has been a long transition to the NIBRS system for reporting over the last several years, and for our respective staffs it has been a big change. King County, after much work by themselves and our staff, has officially made the big transition – and there was much rejoicing. Here is a photo from the King County staff, and kudos to the Sheriff’s Office and our CJIS staff for their great work!

Speaking of the **2017 FBI Crime Report**- it was sent out recently and here is the link:

[2017 Crime in the United States report](#)

In this week’s edition of “I See What You Did There”, here is an example of the ongoing challenge of how **law enforcement incidents are sometimes communicated by the media** in ways that might be perceived as less than balanced. There was an incident involving Los Angeles PD in which two officers approached a car, and an officer and the driver were shot. Here is the complete text of the story from the Associated Press as it appeared in most papers, including our local papers:

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Los Angeles Police Department has released video from a shooting last month that killed a gunman and left an officer with a gunshot wound to her leg. The edited footage posted online Monday is from officer-worn body cameras and a police car dash-cam. It shows an officer approaching a car during a traffic stop on July 27 in North Hills. The officer recognizes the driver — 32-year-old Richard Mendoza — and asks if he’s still on probation. As Mendoza gets out of the car, he pulls a gun and shoots the officer, who collapses. Another officer opens fire, killing Mendoza. The wounded officer can be heard crying out as her partner radios for help.

The LAPD is reviewing the shooting.

That’s it - and I would point out a few things in this story: It was a shooting that “killed a gunman” and minimizes the officer’s wounds- “a gunshot wound to her leg”. It describes the “driver” (not suspect) and their actions in dispassionate ways—“pulls a gun and shoots the officer”. The story then describes the actions of the other officer quite differently: he “opens fire”. This is loaded language to create an emotional response. The story describes, for whatever reason, the other officer “crying out” as her partner radios for help. The last sentence creates the impression that the department is “reviewing the shooting”- we know that’s standard but there must be something wrong with it?

When officers use a firearm in a news story, keep your eye out for the term “opens fire” because I see that frequently as a phrase used for a purpose. “Opening fire” sounds out of control, and an overreaction. The story also contains no mention of the driver other than his name; there is no information on his background.

For comparison, here is the full story from the Los Angeles Times. Take a look at the dash cam video and see how that compares with the AP story. Does the AP story accurately capture the emotion, background, and the demand for split second decision making you see in the video? Note also that the AP story does not include a link to the video- readers would need to actively look for it elsewhere.

<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-lapd-cop-shot-videos-20180910-story.html>

I don't mention this to complain - but just to point out the challenges of effective communication and providing good information to our residents, where emotional and viral videos drive some of the conversation. We need to continue to provide good, transparent information and increase trust through balanced and accurate communication.

The **Mass Shootings Work Group** continues their regular meetings and the link to the most recent meeting on Sept. 18 can be found here if you are interested:

<https://www.tvw.org/watch/?eventID=2018091069>

Have a Great Weekend -

Work Hard- Have Fun- Stay Safe

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