



September 25, 2020

Greetings from your Executive Director:

Here are a few updates this week—

One of the topics we frequently explore is the hyper-divided social media and political environment which makes our profession even more challenging at this time. WASPC developed our [policy proposals](#) in May, and many communities continue discussions about what “defunding the police” really means and have begun to ask the question, “now what?” National media and political attention has focused on the northwest, despite the fact that not every community is like Seattle and Portland.

Along with the community and policy makers, as we work to find reasonable and substantive answers to “now what?” there are some polls and trends that will be illustrative of the move toward solutions, rather than just more division. First, this week the Seattle Times published this [poll](#), which states, “86 percent of voters expressed support for increased accountability for police, including harsher punishments for those who break rules. The same percentage backs retraining officers to emphasize de-escalation and use of force “only as a last resort”. **Fifty-seven percent said they’d back leaving police departments the way they are and giving them more funding “to do their jobs properly.”** Also, “despite broad support for changes to policing, **50 percent of those polled deem recent protests in Seattle ‘more violent than peaceful’** with 39 percent calling them more peaceful.” People are weeding through all the social media and information, and developing opinions that point, again, to constructive and thoughtful changes, not more extreme outcomes.

In the [New York Times](#), a national poll states “nearly **75 percent of survey respondents with a view on the matter want to maintain police funding**. Similarly, most people (66 percent) who have formed an opinion on the subject **don’t want to decrease the size of the police force** or the scope of their work. Americans are also overwhelmingly in favor of changes to police conduct like the elimination of the use of practices that restrict breathing, sometimes referred to as chokeholds. Nearly 80 percent of those with an opinion want to ban the use of this method.”

The article goes on to say, “In a time of deep partisan divide, **these sentiments transcend party. Among people with a view, most Republicans (86 percent), independents (76 percent) and Democrats (61 percent) want to maintain funding for the police.** Similarly, there is widespread support among those with opinions for banning chokeholds (89 percent of Democrats, 81 percent of independents and 63 percent of Republicans).”

This week, the Washington State House Public Safety Committee held a hearing titled “A Call to Action on Police reform- The Need for Evidence Based Solutions”. Here is a [link](#).

The hearing consisted of academics from around the nation and included a number of legislators who asked questions as well. The little bit of news coverage it received featured mostly the most sensationalized and divisive comments, as we have come to expect. The actual hearing, while it did contain some controversial discussions, also had some valuable insights and provided support for many of the changes we have as executives been examining. Dr. Phillip Atiba Goff from John Jay College starts at the 41:00 mark, (here is a [link](#) with just that portion if you wish) and his presentation is thought-provoking. One of his comments was: **“These conversations have been weaponized and politicized in a way that’s unnecessary given the amount of political overlap and agreement we have. How do you engage in these behaviors without risking spikes in violence? And this year, where public safety is on the menu in a way that it hasn’t been before, we are seeing an unprecedented spike in homicide rates nationwide.”**

Dr. Goff recognizes the challenge of change in the current environment and discusses a roadmap. You don’t have to agree with everything he says, or his organization says, but that challenge of change is front-and-center for all of us right now. Dr. Goff acknowledges the impatience in the community. **Going from “do something” to “what does that look like?” is the main question, and we as leaders will be critical to that solution.**

The Peninsula Daily News carried a [good story](#) this week with Sheriff Bill Benedict’s thoughtful comments on current issues.

Pierce County Sheriff Paul Pastor has announced his retirement effective at the end of this month. All of us thank Sheriff Pastor for his work in our state, and the way he has improved our profession and our association, and offer congratulations. We wish him the very best!

Also, as we have mentioned before, we are continuing to work on the (likely virtual) fall conference, which would (likely) be Tuesday, November 17 through Thursday, November 19. Please put a placeholder on your calendars and we will get you more specific information as soon as we can.

Finally this week, our Communications Team has helped us put together **this [video](#) on the Mental Health Field Response (MHFR) Grant program** administered by WASPC. It is on our webpage and will also be sent out via social media. Please use it to help explain and define what many departments are already doing as you communicate with your community and others. If you would like this same link with the final slides to be contacts and logos for your agency, just let us know and we can add that for you.

Stay Safe!

Steve