



Washington Association of
**SHERIFFS &
POLICE CHIEFS**

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FOR RELEASE
March 5, 2021

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Statement attribution:
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**WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF SHERIFFS AND POLICE CHIEFS
STATEMENT**

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Executive Director

(Lacey, WA) – The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) today reaffirmed its commitment to police reform measures that focus on increasing public trust, protecting victims, and improving public safety. We want to build on our record of supporting programs that, when appropriate, divert people away from the criminal justice system and toward behavioral health, mental health, and addiction services. The Washington Legislature is more than halfway through its 2021 session and WASPC is urging lawmakers to support measures that ensure the right balance of reforms with good, engaged policing.

The legalization of controlled substances without substantial commitments to build and fund the infrastructure to address the root causes of addiction represent the worst of both worlds. Last week’s Washington Supreme Court ruling (State v Blake) has taken away one of the primary means the Legislature gave law enforcement to handle calls for service where drugs and addiction are involved. It is now up to the Legislature to decide what efforts will be made to respond to the decision and to combat substance use disorder, including simple possession, use, and the victimization and criminal behavior that can be associated with supporting addiction.

While we are deeply troubled by the Court’s ruling, the Legislature now has an opportunity to make meaningful improvements to help those who need help. At the very least, the Legislature should take action to address the constitutionality of the simple possession statute. The Legislature, however, should not stop there. We ask our policy makers to take this opportunity to also make prevention, intervention, and treatment services as readily available in the community as drugs may be.

As the legislature starts to consider the next biennial budget we ask them to ensure support for robust programs that help get people into treatment and support and enhance public safety in our communities. Drug courts, mental health courts, and programs administered by WASPC including [Mental Health Field Response](#), and [Arrest and Jail Alternatives Program](#) are examples of solutions that work.

Community expectations are urgent, and we need to provide outcomes that balance reform and public safety. These are conversations and changes that cannot wait, and it is our collective responsibility to get it right. We will work to bring communities together and continue to be committed to the best possible outcomes for community

Serving the Law Enforcement Community and the Citizens of Washington

expectations and public safety.

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About WASPC:

WASPC was founded in 1963 and consists of executive and top management personnel from law enforcement agencies statewide. With more than 900 members it includes the 39 elected county sheriffs, and 240 police chiefs, as well as the Washington State Patrol, the Washington Department of Corrections, and representatives of Tribal and federal agencies.

WASPC is the only association of its kind in the nation combining representatives from local, state, tribal, and federal law enforcement into a single body, working toward a common goal. WASPC's function is to provide specific materials and services to all law enforcement agencies in the state, members, and non-members alike.