



Washington Association of
**SHERIFFS &
POLICE CHIEFS**

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**WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF SHERIFFS AND POLICE CHIEFS
STATEMENT ON 2021 WASHINGTON LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

(Lacey, WA) -- The 2021 session of the Washington State Legislature brought a renewed focus on policing and public safety. WASPC recognized the need and advocated for evidence based, informed, comprehensive, and thoughtful reform of law enforcement practices this session.

WASPC priorities focused on support for those doing the job the right way and are based on the idea that **reform and good police work are not mutually exclusive**. Effective law enforcement requires public trust.

Long before the session, WASPC outlined priorities in a [letter](#) to Washington legislative leaders and the governor. Specific draft legislation was also developed by WASPC based on approved [Principles for Community Trust](#) which are consistent with our reform priorities.

Throughout the session we worked with policy makers, community groups, and other stakeholders to improve the public service of law enforcement in our state. Our focus was to also support the men and women doing this job the right way, every day.

At the same time, events across the country involving police accountability have created an environment of urgency to establish new policies that determine how law enforcement handles, responds to calls, and investigates crimes. WASPC supports many of the concepts passed by the Washington legislature in 2021 including:

- Increased support for response to behavior and mental health issues from diversion and health professionals, rather than the criminal justice system.
- Enhanced programs to encourage wellness and training for police officers
- More options for chiefs and sheriffs to terminate and discipline, and for the state to decertify peace and corrections officers when necessary. This is a critical element of ensuring accountability.
- Improve de-escalation training to limit the use of deadly force.

We are also grateful the legislature acted on an important and urgent issue on drug possession. Everyone agrees that the criminal justice system is not the best place to

provide services for addiction, but we maintained that we also need to incentivize treatment for some and balance the approach with public safety. The expansion of treatment and support services is something we have long supported and that element is a positive outcome.

The specifics of how law enforcement agencies will make changes in accordance with new laws will occur over the next several months. In the meantime, we urge the advocates, community leaders and legislators who championed these changes to assist in bringing our communities together and improving public trust.

Washington State law enforcement must continue to improve policies, training, culture, and transparency moving forward, and WASPC is committed to working with policy makers and community stakeholders to further this goal.

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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.

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