



Washington Association of **SHERIFFS & POLICE CHIEFS**

Media Bill of Rights

It is important to remember that you have certain rights when dealing with the media. These are important to remember and to practice before you start any interview.

You have the right to...

1. *Expect courtesy from reporters.*

As with any other business relationship, you don't have to put up with bad manners.

2. *Be treated fairly.*

Don't be coerced into anything. Deal directly and above board.

3. *Ask questions before the interview begins.*

You may ask questions and often the reporter will answer questions such as: When will the story run/air? How many others are being interviewed for this story? Who are they? Am I the first interview of this story or the last?

4. *Ask questions after the interview is over.*

If you need to call a reporter to clarify statements, offer additional comments or suggest other people for the reporter to interview.

5. *Present facts rather than opinion.*

If you stick to the facts, you are less likely to regret your statements later.

6. *Explain your point of view.*

If your point of view is that of a police officer, then don't comment from the point of view of others (city officials, healthcare professionals, etc.)

7. *Refuse to answer leading or hostile questions.*

It will be difficult to remain calm but you will never have the last word, so don't be led into a trap.

8. *Refuse to offer proprietary information.*

Know what information is available under the Freedom of Information Act and what is acceptable as privileged.

9. *Say "I don't know".*

These are the three most powerful words in media relations. If you don't know, say it and then offer to help the reporter find out. Never lie or go off the record.

10. *End the interview.*

If you think you've said enough, tell the reporter and offer to speak again at another time.