



PROTECTING PUBLIC SAFETY AND HONORING THE SERVICE OF OUR FALLEN OFFICERS

Public safety is a top priority of Governor Chris Gregoire. While Washingtonians were encouraged that the crime rate in Washington declined in 2009, we were stunned and saddened by the murder of six law enforcement officers as the year ended.

Governor Gregoire knows the best outcomes and most appropriate responses to tragedies of this nature come when the men and women of the criminal justice system, who work with these issues every day, are consulted and provide their best insights. This is why she called upon the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, Washington Council of Police and Sheriffs, Fraternal Order of Police, Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, Superior Court Judges Association and the Department of Corrections to examine the circumstances surrounding the Lakewood police officer murders to see what lessons could be learned and what improvements to our public safety system could be made.



The message of this group of law enforcement leaders was clear: We must be thoughtful about any changes to the criminal justice system based on an act of criminality and avoid unintended consequences. We will honor the lives of our fallen officers by acting in this deliberate and considered manner.

We have pulled together as a community to mourn the deaths of our fallen heroes and to support their families and friends. We must again pull together as a unified community to implement sensible policy changes in response to these tragedies. As it is etched on the Washington State Law Enforcement Memorial, "Their duty was to serve. Our duty is to remember."

Governor Gregoire believes it is also our duty to act this session, and that is why she is proud to support the consensus recommendations presented to her by these law enforcement organizations. These are summarized below.

Change the broken Interstate Compact on Offender Supervision

We need to alter the Interstate Compact on Offender Supervision to provide more authority to host states, which should have the power to sanction, hold and return offenders who violate the terms of their supervision. The host state must also have the complete criminal history before an offender arrives. The Department of Corrections will continue its work to change the procedures of the Interstate Compact both through the compact organization and through collaboration with our state congressional delegation.

Support the survivors and protect the privacy of law enforcement officers

Governor Gregoire supports House Bill 2519, which would improve the death benefits for survivors of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty. Among other actions, the bill eliminates the requirement of a minimum term of service for eligibility, waives state higher education tuition for children of survivors, increases the death benefit to reflect inflation and allows spouses who remarry to retain the pension.

The Governor will also support the efforts of law enforcement organizations to protect the private personal information of law enforcement officers from public disclosure when that information could be used to harass or retaliate against law enforcement officers or their families.

Reform the bail system

The Governor will propose a constitutional amendment to provide judges the discretion to deny bail based on public safety concerns. She also will convene a workgroup at the end of the legislative session to undertake a thorough review of the bail system in Washington and propose necessary changes.

Improve communications

The Department of Corrections will complete its work with the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs to ensure community corrections officers are linked to the statewide victim notification system and are automatically notified when an offender is booked or released from jail.

The Governor will work with law enforcement representatives to enhance the system of computer alerts so a law enforcement officer knows whether an individual being contacted has a history of

violent criminal behavior. She also will work with the Superior Court Judges Association to implement a process statewide to give judges greater access to information when making pre-trial release decisions, including access to a validated risk assessment tool. Finally, the Department of Corrections will work with law enforcement representatives to develop protocols to enhance the ability of officers in the field to contact a community corrections officer and to detain an offender under supervision who is violating the terms and conditions of his or her release.

Hold offenders accountable

The Department of Corrections will pursue legislation to enhance the penalty against any person under community supervision who assaults a law enforcement officer or a community corrections officer. The Governor will support efforts of the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs to enhance the penalties for persons who knowingly provide a weapon to an offender who is prohibited from possessing a weapon under federal law.



Prevent tragedies by learning the lessons of officer-involved shootings

The Governor will support the efforts of the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs to secure federal funding to initiate a research project into the factors that are common to officer-involved shootings. This would include a review of armed confrontations with police for the past five years.