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SHERIFF SCHEYER'S STATEMENT ON LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT INVOLVEMENT IN IMMIGRATION ISSUES

12/31/2024 – Over the past few weeks, I have received numerous inquiries regarding local law enforcement involvement in potential immigration initiatives at the federal level. I realize this is a divisive issue, but there should be no divisiveness on the brightline rules established by what our Washington state laws and Constitution have set forth, as well as the United States Constitution. Peace officers within the State of Washington have the authority to enforce Washington state laws, not federal laws. The Washington State Sheriff's Association and the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs have provided insight and guidance for this potential change at the federal level. The following is an overview of our local law enforcement authority, with excerpts taken from the W.A.S.P.C. press release dated 12/18/2024:

“Deportation, immigration, and federal law enforcement duties are under the jurisdiction of the federal courts and federal law enforcement agencies. The focus of local law enforcement is on criminal violations that affect local community safety and quality of life.

Local law enforcement agencies work with federal law enforcement and the federal court system on an ongoing basis. The collaborative partnerships between local law enforcement and federal law enforcement are primarily responsible for addressing some of the biggest threats to public safety. The resulting benefits to Washington residents have included the dismantling and interruption of cartel level drug trafficking organizations, human trafficking rings, organized crime groups, illegal gun manufacturing and trafficking, terrorist groups, and many other safety threats to our communities.

Washington state law does not permit the housing of individuals in local jails solely for federal administrative matters such as immigration status. It is also worth noting that immigration status should not protect or impede investigation or prosecution of any person involved in a state crime.

The essence, and strength, of local law enforcement in our nation is that Sheriffs and Police Chiefs are accountable to the U.S. and Washington State Constitutions, and Sheriffs are also accountable to the voters in the county where they were elected. The federal government has no direct authority over local law enforcement.”

The Skamania County Sheriff's Office will work to support federal entities in their criminal investigations within Skamania County. Having a collaborative relationship, with a clear understanding of our differing authorities, has proven beneficial in the past and continues today.

I am sure many of you will have questions and/or concerns regarding this information. I encourage you to reach out to me directly so we can have a continued discussion on this very important topic. My E-mail address is summers@co.skamania.wa.us and my phone number is 509-427-9490 Extension 2011.