

Washington Coalition for Police Accountability Work Accomplished and Work Lying Ahead

Who We Are

The Washington Coalition for Police Accountability (WCPA) is unique among those involved in the police accountability work at the Washington State Legislature, and perhaps unique nationally. We center families who have lost loved ones to police violence, and who have experienced the consequences of police use of unnecessary, excessive, and deadly force. The Coalition's direction is set by these families and the priorities are directly related to injustices encountered by these families.

Our mission is to develop and advocate for state-wide policies to reduce police violence and increase accountability. In addition to the leadership of impacted families, the history of race and policing, and the impacts of discriminatory policing on Black Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, Pacific Islanders, and others, underlies all of WCPA's work.

The Coalition membership and values grew out of advocacy for Initiative 940, which was approved by nearly 60% of the state's voters in November 2018. This Initiative changed the standard for justifiable use of force, put training standards for de-escalation into state law, required first aid be rendered at the scene, required criminal investigations of police use of force separate from the involved agency, and mandated that implementation of these policies include the impacted community. This success began a power shift in Washington state and created credibility and a presence for the families and other advocates.

With the national dynamics following the death of George Floyd, and local pressure due to the murder of Manuel Ellis by Tacoma Police, WCPA formed to address the many needed statewide reforms not addressed by I-940.

Recent Successes

During the 2020 legislative session, the WCPA prioritized five bills that took critical steps necessary to transforming police culture in Washington and preventing future violent encounters between police and members of the public.

The framing was set out in three parts, and we achieved unprecedented success with four of our priorities passing, and the fifth a priority for 2022. The three parts:

One, to prevent violence and clarify the public's expectations for officer behavior.

- **HB 1054**. This bill bans or restricts harmful and deadly tactics used by law enforcement, including a ban on chokeholds and no-knock warrants — the type of tactics that gained national attention last year through the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor.
 - **Passed.**
- **HB 1310**. The bill establishes a statewide standard for police officers to de-escalate situations and allows an officer to use lethal force only when necessary

to protect against a life-threatening situation. It establishes in state law a duty of care.

- **Passed.**

Two, to build the public's confidence in government systems for holding officers accountable.

- **HB 1267.** The bill promotes transparency and accountability by establishing a new civilian agency within the governor's office to handle independent criminal investigations of deadly force incidents.
 - **Passed.**

Finally, to make it easier to hold officers accountable when they've engaged in misconduct and to motivate departments to uphold higher standards of policing.

- **HB 1202** - Remove barriers to filing civil cases and enforcing the duty to de-escalate.
 - **Priority for 2022.**
- **SB 5051.** The bill addresses police misconduct in several ways, most notably by expanding the conduct for revoking an officer's certification. The bill also fills a third of the criminal justice training commission (CJTC) seats with community members, and the majority of the commission is non law enforcement.
 - **Passed.**

These priorities paint a picture of how police culture must change, and the processes to assure that happens. These priorities set out the rules by which the community expects law enforcement to operate, and then lays out the processes to use when law enforcement breaks these rules.

The Ongoing Work

With this tremendous legislative success as a testament to our credibility, we are now focused on maintaining these wins through strong implementation as well as taking care of unfinished business.

The implementation work requires significant tracking and monitoring over the next five years. For example, each enactment includes policy roles for community members: we worked to ensure that community is well represented on the Criminal Justice Training Commission, that the Office of Independent Investigations Advisory Board includes voices of impacted families, and that community has input on policy relating to data collection and canine use.

SB 5051, which is a landmark revision to law enforcement certification in this state, includes rule making engagement and policy development. This, coupled with the work on the other bills, requires significant attention from WCPA members. We have learned that if the community does not stay at the table, then the process and the product will reflect the status quo.

Law Enforcement is pushing back against the enactments, with a coordinated fear-based campaign of misinformation intended to seed second thoughts about the reforms. We will be working to maintain them *and* fight against a roll back.

With respect to unfinished business, we continue our work on the following bills:

- *Preventing violence, setting community expectations*
 - SB 5485, which addresses traffic stops.
- *Holding officers accountable*
 - HB 1202, which provides a civil right of action by victims and their families for excessive use of force.
 - HB 1507, to establish an independent prosecutor to handle criminal cases of police use of deadly force from the independent investigation process under HB 1267, separate from the local prosecutor.
 - Establish state-wide minimum standards and protections to ensure department-level administrative investigations and procedures are accountable, transparent, and further community safety.

Some members of WCPA have worked on these reforms since 2015, and others are new to the table. The work has become substantial and not just a singular moment or campaign. We have momentum and commitment and cannot turn away from this work.

Coalition Members

Families

- Dani Bargala Sanchez, family of Rene Davis
- DeVitta Briscoe, family of Che Taylor
- Fred and Annalesa Thomas, family of Leonard Thomas
- Johnette Haines, family of Shaun Fuhr
- Katrina Johnson, family of Charleena Lyles
- Marilyn Covarrubias, family of Daniel Covarrubias
- Nickeia Hunter, family of Carlos Hunter
- Po Leapai, family of Iosia Faletogo
- Shelly Washington, family of Kevin Peterson Jr.
- Sonia Joseph, family of Giovonn Joseph McDade
- Trishandra Pickup, family of Stonechild Chiefstick

Organizations

- ACLU Washington
- Alliance for Gun Responsibility
- Clark County Justice Group
- Disability Rights Washington
- Faith Action Network
- I Did the Time
- Muckleshoot Tribe
- Next Steps Washington

- Northwest Immigrant Rights Project
- Not This Time
- SEIU 1199 NW
- Suquamish Tribe

The WCPA membership also includes individuals serving as community advocates or subject matter experts.