

WASHINGTON



FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE

For Immediate Release

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(Kennewick, WA, March 2, 2020) The Washington State Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) represents law enforcement officers and similar public safety professionals throughout the state of Washington.

The Fraternal Order of Police is the world's largest police organization of sworn law enforcement officers, with more than 350,000 members in more than 2,200 local lodges located in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Washington State has 23 Local Lodges and within those regional lodges. The Washington State FOP is therefore concerned with all issues that impact the safety and well-being of our members and the public they serve, regardless of location.

Further, The Washington State FOP Labor Coalition represents law enforcement members throughout the state, and the Benton County Sheriff's Guild is a group represented in that capacity. In summary, the Washington State Fraternal Order of Police is the voice of those who dedicate their lives to protecting and serving our communities in the State of Washington and hold to the following:

Vision: To be an advocate for all law enforcement both professionally and personally by providing service, protection, support, and benefits while fostering relationships with our communities.

Mission: To safeguard law enforcement officer's personal and professional well-being, enhance professionalism, empower our state and local lodges, and enhance community relationships.

Core Values: 1). Integrity 2). Professionalism 3). Family 4). Diversity/Inclusion

As to the current matter, Sheriff Hatcher's statement dated 2/28/2020 states;

"As the Sheriff, I am ultimately responsible for everything that happens within the organization and I will take ownership for our current circumstance. I have had a long history of having the support of my staff, peers and community."

The Washington State FOP commends the Sheriff's ownership of the current condition of the Benton County Sheriff's Office and the undesirable work environment that the members of the Benton County Sheriff's Guild are experiencing. Unfortunately concerns regarding the Sheriff's labor related issues, employment practices, allegations relating to misuse of public funds to the detriment of public safety and allegations relating to domestic violence continue to emerge, and a thorough independent investigation would help to shed light on the accuracy of all accusations.

The members of law enforcement are very familiar with the criminal and internal investigation process. Investigations of this nature are generally automatic for anyone in law enforcement when allegations of criminal activity, especially domestic violence or misuse of public funds have been made regarding a member of law enforcement to address questions of policy violations and/or law violations. It is common knowledge if there is an issue that may be of a criminal nature that the criminal investigation always is the first investigation to be conducted. The internal administrative investigation is conducted separately, and generally is conducted at the close of the criminal investigation.

It is the recommendation of the Washington State FOP that this investigation be done by a law enforcement agency outside of the Benton and Franklin County area. Both Benton and Franklin Counties work together on many issues related to public services and public safety. In a desire to not jeopardize those long-term and well-earned relationships it would be best that an investigative body come from outside the region.

The people of Benton County, the law enforcement officers in the Benton County Deputies Guild and Sheriff Hatcher deserve to have an investigation that shines light on all associated accusations. It is the hope that the results of such an investigation would provide healing and transparency that all involved parties would welcome.

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ABOUT THE WASHINGTON STATE FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE

The Washington State Fraternal Order of Police (WAFOP) is a 501(c)8 non-profit organization which represents nearly 3,000 law enforcement officers in the state. Our motto is "Cops helping Cops".

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