



Thurston County Sheriff's Office

"Creating a Safer Community Together."

Sheriff Dan Kimball

Community Alert

Press Release

March 9, 2009

Released by: Sheriff Dan Kimball

"Community safety at risk if wrong choices are made."

The apparent decision on the part of Thurston County Commissioners to not prioritize funding for sheriffs deputies **will** jeopardize community safety. As the elected Sheriff I believe it is imperative upon me to speak honestly and loudly on this subject, in order for our citizens to be informed as to what may be happening in their community.

As every one knows already, Thurston County faces serious budgetary issues. As Sheriff I also recognize that no phase of county government can go unscathed from these budget cuts. We lost 7 deputy sheriff positions this year, as well as corrections deputy positions and civilian staff. Bluntly put, these are difficult economic times for all.

However, the most recent proposed budget cuts on the part of the county commissioners will place the safety of our citizens in this community at **grave risk** if enacted in the direction they have indicated they desire to go. The most recent proposed budgetary reductions have the Sheriff's Office cutting 1.9 million dollars out of our already reduced 2009 budget, by mid-year. Furthermore, the commissioners have indicated their desire to have no cuts made in the corrections (jail) end of the Sheriff's Office, thereby in effect mandating serious operational reductions in deputy sheriff positions. In order to meet this reduction, we would have to reduce our patrol deputy staff by approximately 33%. Similar reductions would have to occur in our investigative staff. Currently the Thurston

County Sheriff's Office is the most understaffed sheriff's office in the state of Washington, based on the number of deputy sheriffs to citizens served. We would return to staffing levels of three decades ago. We would be forced to cease responding to certain crimes and, most disturbingly, I would not be able to ensure our citizens that we could make a timely response to serious, violent crimes as well. A cut of deputies at this level would jeopardize the safety of all of the citizens of this community. It is an **irresponsible** choice.

The county has other options than cutting deputy sheriff positions. They can access what are known as "road diversion funds" in order to offset the layoff of deputy sheriffs. I have asked for their commitment to pursuing and utilizing these funds to keep our community safe and my request has thus far been met with silence on the part of the Board.

The county can also access sales tax detention funds in order to keep from having to lay off corrections deputies working in the Thurston County Jail. This money can be used to pay for existing staff. I have suggested that they utilize this money to keep from having to reduce staff in the jail.

As I stated above, as the elected sheriff I believe citizens want me to speak out and advocate for their safety at all times. These are very important times. The level of cuts and directions of those cuts, as well as the apparent disinterest in accessing available funding to save these deputy sheriff positions in jeopardy speaks volumes to the priority placed on public safety by the Board of County Commissioners. My duty and my conscience require me to speak out.

If you would like to voice your concern over this issue, I have included the people I would ask you to convey that concern to:

- 1) Commissioner Cathy Wolfe – 786-5440 – e-mail: wolfec@co.thurston.wa.us
- 2) Commissioner Sandra Romero – 786-5440 – e-mail: romeros@co.thurston.wa.us
- 3) Commissioner Karen Valenzuela – 786-5440 – e-mail: valenzk@co.thurston.wa.us

Of course if you would like to speak with me further on this issue, please contact me at either 786-5501 or e-mail at kimbald@co.thurston.wa.us

Thanks in advance for caring about your community.

Dan