

Hello to the membership of Western States Sheriff's Association,

It was nice to gather and see each other again. For those of you were able to visit us in Reno for our conference, Thank YOU very much. We, the organization needs you very much. Sheriff Fred Lamphere, thanks for the great job you did in a difficult year.

As we prepare for the next year of challenges, I'm going to reflect back on some of the past of what made me want to join WSSA. The opportunity really didn't become possible until 2009, the sheriff before me wasn't interested. However, a sheriff I went to high school with was a real recruiter and talked me into it. After my first meeting in Vegas, I recognized the value of WSSA. Tony Harbaugh was the mentor encouraging me to join as he and others, were founding members. WSSA was struggling, at least that was my first impression,

Jim Pond came forward and made some incredible promises, at least to this kid in the cheap seats. Well, Jim has proven up on those promises and we continue to get better each year. We had a first timer that I know of, Sheriff Danny Glick was president of NSA and WSSA at the same time, WOW!

Each conference I listen to a sheriff recount an event in their life, thinking, I don't think I'll ever hear something that will top that, but I do. The incredible part of being a sheriff is forward thinking, what are the unintended consequences of the decisions I, we, are about to make. Being able to hear shared experiences like that are stored in our cognitive section for retrieval later.

The level of respect is accumulated by calming a situation or handling it with a call to someone you know. Our reputation is built by our behavior, our citizens know we care and we will listen. There are people with PhD's out there, degrees and the like, second guessing every move we make. I met some of those people, academically talented they are, but in real life, they can't tell the difference between a birchen strap and a bridle.

Moving in to our current situation, our brothers and sisters on the southern border have been placed into undue hardship and a level of harm's way not experienced before. We have an action plan.

We are proficient at engaging our federal partners early and often. We need to give support to our governors, state and federal representatives so they are informed of what the impact immigration, human trafficking, cartels and other illegal drug activities are occurring on our borders. We, as representatives from WSSA are standing beside our border sheriffs, nationally and locally.

To support these efforts of enforcement, we must have current Intel, training on techniques for officer safety for our warriors. WSSA must utilize multiple resources to battle of several fronts, these include, but not limited to:

Officer safety, this is techniques and equipment. We have talked about a scholarship for education in the name of the late Sheriff Gary Painter. Sheriff Lamphere has an idea of educational school programs, different than DARE, to bridge the gap with our younger generation.

Legislation that allows our personnel to perform their job of keeping the peace without fear of litigation or losing everything they have. (Qualified immunity). Training for legal aspect, this includes in-depth knowledge of the U.S. Constitution and your respective state's constitution. For these are the bedrock of which our nation is founded on. This is the line we must hold by teaching it and knowing exactly how it applies to us. We are the last bastion of protection, closest to the citizens than anyone that is elected. Our citizens count on us protecting them by knowing our job and standing up for those whose voices may be too small to be heard.

It is my honor to preach to the choir and you have certainly earned my respect. So, to answer the question of someone you may be mentoring: why does WSSA make you a better leader, decision maker and someone who can stand on fundamentals of our US constitution? It is the membership who is there recognizing the value of an elected sheriff. The experience level for our full service offices is unmatched by our western sheriffs.

During the week of July 18th, the executive board participated in a planning retreat in Montana's vast Bob Marshall wilderness. Most of the executive board rode horses into the wilderness for our meeting. Joining us was USFS Director of Law Enforcement Tracy Perry and other division leaders. Also, Sheriff Brown and Sheriff Glover from the government affairs committee. We shared ideas, issues, and solutions, enjoyed great weather and food, and left that week with a stronger understanding of responsibilities and greater friendship.

I'll close with Psalms Chapter 23;

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the path of righteousness for his name sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou prepares a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Fellow peace officers, it is an honor to serve with you and for you.

Sheriff Leo C. Dutton Western States Sheriff Association President.