



# Western States Sheriffs Association

## President's Letter



Growing up in Condon, Oregon I suppose I paid little attention to the happenings of the world when I was young. Time was filled farming and helping neighbors and in so many ways the world was a much simpler place back in those days. I also know now that I am more aware of growing older anytime I use the phrase "back in those days."

I never thought that sometime in my life I would be able to make a difference in the lives of so many others.

The call to the elected office of Sheriff is one of the greatest opportunities I have ever undertaken. It has provided me the chance to become an integral part of positive change for the past 19 years.

It has also made me aware of how much our world has changed and continues to change on an almost daily basis. Just a couple of weeks ago I represented all of you as I traveled to Cochise County in Arizona to meet with President Donald Trump at the southwest border. At the invitation of Sheriff Mark Dannels of Cochise County, I made the trip because I know how critical the relationship between the federal government and the county Sheriff is. I had the wonderful opportunity to meet Mr. Trump and to briefly talk about the travesty and tragedies that have been happening along the border.

My tenure with the Western States Sheriffs Association has given an education regarding the effects that the open border policy has had on America. I am more committed to effecting change than ever before.

This past month has been wrought with wildfires across many western states and even here in Gilliam County we were not immune. We all juggle so many issues daily that sometimes it becomes easy to overlook the bigger picture of the cascading effects of national issues.

It remains imperative that we stay focused on both the small picture of safety and security in our home county while at the same time, coming together to speak out in solidarity on the big picture issues that are affecting this nation.

I want to take a moment to express my sadness at the loss of Gilpin County Colorado Undersheriff Tonia Kapke this past month. Tonia was a long-time supporter of WSSA and served as our executive assistant for the past year. Her coordination of our annual trade show was unmatched and her love and respect for the Office of Sheriff was so apparent. She will be missed by all who knew her. We offer our prayers and support to Sheriff Armstrong and the great people of Gilpin County, Colorado and to Tonia's beautiful family as well.

I pray you all remain safe.

Sheriff Gary Bettencourt  
President, WSSA