



June 13, 2023

To: Washington State Department of Commerce Director, Mike Fong
From: The Elected Officials of Skagit County
RE: Support for funding of the Skagit County Interlocal Drug Task Force

Dear Director Fong,

As elected officials, we come together to express our concerns with the draft Byrne/JAG strategic plan currently being proposed by the Washington State Department of Commerce Office of Firearm Safety. This draft plan will have serious implications for the sixteen remaining drug task forces across the State of Washington including ours, the Skagit County Interlocal Drug Enforcement Unit or "SCIDEU". We recognize the safety, health and well-being of our community and citizens depends upon the continued proven success of our local drug task force.

The State of Washington is currently amid the deadliest drug epidemic it has ever faced. Multi-Jurisdictional Drug Task Forces play a vital role in preventing overdoses and saving lives as a key part of a holistic approach towards solving this crisis. It is not difficult to imagine the impact that reduced funding to the task forces will have to include an increase in violent crimes, decrease in public safety and increase in drug overdoses and deaths along with all the added costs that will come.

The State of Washington does not currently provide funding to the sixteen Byrne/JAG Multi-Jurisdictional Drug Task Forces "MJDTF's" despite the statewide nexus many of their investigations have. The Department of Commerce has acted as the pass-thru agency for Federal Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant funding.

The Byrne/JAG grant has provided most task forces with the only stable and dedicated source of revenue for operational funding for over twenty years.

The current proposed draft strategic plan is a sudden and uncollaborated surprise departure from long-standing precedent and policy set solely by the Department of Commerce. Task forces will be in very real jeopardy if this plan is adopted and will be left scrambling, with budget deadlines looming, to find an alternative reliable source of funding. Finally, the Office of Firearm Safety has also commissioned a study on the task forces to understand what they do, how they are funded, and their viability in the current law enforcement and criminal justice climate. Why not wait until that process is complete to make strategic funding decisions that will directly impact the task forces, our communities and the state? This may mean delaying any decisions for a year or two but would seem to be a fair and reasonable resolution to this issue.

On behalf of our constituents, we stand in support of "SCIDEU" and the other drug task forces across the state of Washington and ask that you not adopt the draft Byrne/JAG strategic plan currently under consideration by the Office of Firearms Safety within your department.

Respectfully,

Anacortes Mayor Matt Miller

Burlington Mayor Steve Sexton



Mount Vernon Mayor Jill Boudreau



Sedro-Woolley Mayor Julia Johnson



Skagit County Chair Ron Wesen



County Commissioner Lisa Janicki



County Commissioner Peter Browning

cc: Governor Inslee

Amber Erps

From: Commissioners
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 2:53 PM
To: 'mike.fong@commerce.wa.gov'; 'sarah.coggins@commerce.wa.gov';
'kate.kelly@commerce.wa.gov'; 'anica.stieve@commerce.wa.gov'
Cc: 'jeremy.harrison-smith@gov.wa.gov'; Matt Miller; jennifert@cityofanacortes.org;
'steves@burlingtonwa.gov'; 'jenniferr@burlingtonwa.gov';
'mvmayor@mountvernonwa.gov'; 'kerrig@mountvernonwa.gov'; 'swmayor@sedro-
woolley.gov'; Jennifer Johnson
Subject: Concerns from Elected Officials of Skagit County RE draft Dept of Commerce Office of
Firearm Safety Byrne/JAG strategic plan
Attachments: 06-14-2023 - Elected Official Letter to Mike Fong for support for SCIDEU.pdf

Good afternoon,

Attached is a joint letter from the Elected Officials of Skagit County outlining concerns with the draft Byrne/JAG strategic plan currently being proposed by the Washington State Department of Commerce Office of Firearm Safety.

Sincerely,

Skagit County Commissioners
Ron Wesen, Lisa Janicki & Peter Browning
1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon, WA 98273
commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us