



Lewis County Prosecuting
Attorney's Office

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TO: WHOM IT MAY CONCERN
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FROM: JONATHAN L. MEYER, PROSECUTING ATTORNEY *JLM*

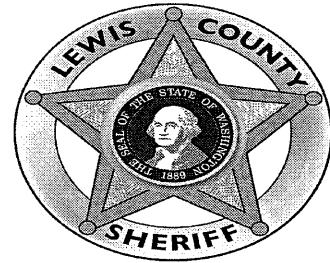
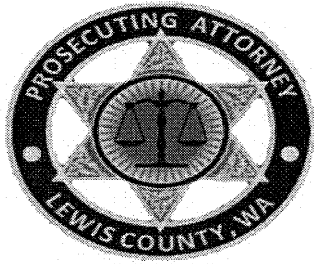
DATE: DECEMBER 3, 2020

RE: LETTER TO GOVERNOR INSLEE

The Prosecutor and Sheriff of Lewis County have signed and emailed the *attached* letter to Governor Inslee regarding COVID-19 response in Lewis County.

Please contact either the Lewis County Sheriff's Office or the Lewis County Prosecuting Attorney's Office with any questions.

It is the Mission of the Lewis County Prosecutor's Office to zealously seek justice in all criminal matters, consistently promote public confidence in the legal system, and diligently represent county government while adhering to the highest ethical and moral standards.



December 3, 2020

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Governor Inslee:

Since the beginning of the Pandemic, the State of Washington has taken lead role as to how to address the spread of COVID-19. To that end, the State of Washington has imposed various restrictions upon the citizens of the State of Washington, their activities, and their livelihoods. The State of Washington has then looked to local communities to voluntarily comply and, if there is not voluntary compliance, to local authorities to seek compliance either through administrative or criminal coercion.

While some restrictions may be appropriate, the State has failed to effectively communicate sufficient information or rationale for much, if not most, of the restrictions. The State has also failed to provide adequate resources or guidance to local authorities saddled with much of the "enforcement" role resulting from the State's mandates. As a result, the ability for local authorities to address and enforce the State's pandemic restrictions are simply too burdensome on smaller communities such as Lewis County.

In addition to the State imposed mandates, Lewis County has seen increases in domestic violence, drug abuse, drug related deaths, suicides, homelessness and myriads of other physical health, mental health, and crime related issues. These additional stressors on already limited resources requires Lewis County to best allocate resources and prioritize our responses.

Lewis County's response and the compliance of its citizens has, to this point, been exemplary. Lewis County was among the leaders in the state getting children back into safe learning environments. While Lewis County still encourages its citizenry to be proactive in preventing the spread of COVID-19, the enforcement of the regulations must fall to the State. By allowing the State to enforce its COVID-19 related mandates, Lewis County will be able to allocate resources to the consequences resulting from the restrictions, not the disease itself.

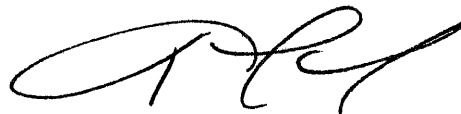
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Given that the State of Washington has much the same jurisdiction as Lewis County, the State is able to enforce its orders regarding pandemic related restrictions. If law enforcement is needed to assist the State in enforcing the restrictions, the Washington State Patrol (WSP) has authority throughout the State of Washington, including Lewis County to assist the State as needed. If the WSP decides to file charges within the Lewis County District Court or decides to refer charges to the Lewis County Prosecutor's Office, those matters will be reviewed and handled on a case by case basis.

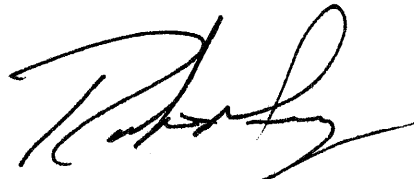
We hope, as the one that created and imposed these restrictions, you will acknowledge the measures taken thus far have not achieved the desired impact on the spread of COVID-19. You should also acknowledge the restrictions have had a devastating impact for many in ways far greater than the health risks posed by COVID-19. While the health risks are an important factor, how does one measure the loss of hope, the despair, or the desperation felt. Unfortunately, those are being measured in increases in ways pandemic numbers do not capture.

As Governor, you can take much action unilaterally, and you have shown your willingness to do so. As you encourage the citizens to work together to get through this difficult time, we too encourage you to work with the legislature to find the best approach and curb the spread of COVID-19 and addressing the issues, often times more serious, that have resulted from the State's restrictions.

Sincerely,



JONATHAN L. MEYER
Prosecuting Attorney



ROBERT SNAZA
Sheriff