

April 22, 2020

Representative Robert Sutherland  
State Representative  
405 John L O'Brien Building  
PO BOX 40600  
Olympia, Washington 98504

DELIVERED via EMAIL

RE: Comments as Cited in Seattle Times Article

Dear Representative Sutherland:

On Sunday, April 19, 2020, you are noted as attending a rally held on the State Capital grounds regarding the Governor's stay-at-home order. In a Seattle Times article (April 20, 2020) titled "[Demonstrators rally in Olympia against Washington's coronavirus stay-at-home order](#)" troubling statements are attributed to you that if accurate, are very concerning to law enforcement officers. We respect and care about our relationship and want to give you an opportunity to explain, but please know that if these statements are accurate, we take them to be your call for force by arms against law enforcement. That cannot stand.

WACOPS is our State's largest law enforcement labor advocate. We represent about half of Washington's rank and file police officers and sheriff's deputies in departments across the State, including your district. We work daily to defend our members' working conditions with an emphasis on issues that affect their safety, pensions, and collective bargaining rights. In the last several years we have been at the table engaged in difficult conversations about community and police relationships. We have learned that many citizens' opinions and subsequent responses to peace officers are based on misinformation and emotion. When leaders make statements, it has a resulting impact to our officers when contacting citizens. In some cases, unnecessary violence, injury, and death result from statements that encourage citizens to resort to violence.

During this unprecedented stay home order peace officers are working in their communities diplomatically and with great empathy for the strain this is putting on everyone. As the days and weeks pass under the stay at home order, elected officials at all levels will be needed to inspire confidence, calm, and good citizenry. We are choosing to believe that you did not intend for our officers to be confronted with violence as a result of your comments. With this in mind, we respectfully request that you publicly retract your statements and encourage citizens to respect our peace officers. We are certain you would not want to be attributed to any act of aggression against one of our state's selfless public servants sworn to protect life.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration. I look forward to hearing from you and discussing this in more depth.

Sincerely,



Teresa Taylor  
Executive Director