

Resolution to improve community-police relations by fostering accountability and public trust

WHEREAS we believe that criminal justice and human rights are inseparable;

WHEREAS progressive action against injustice is a core part of our Democratic Party Platform;

WHEREAS we affirm the role of law enforcement is to protect human life and to serve the community;

WHEREAS we believe that accountability and public trust are necessary for a healthy relationship between our communities and the law enforcement agencies that serve us;

WHEREAS the current law in Washington state on the justifiable use of deadly force by law enforcement (RCW 9A.16.040) fails to provide clear guidance for law enforcement regarding the use of deadly force;

WHEREAS this law makes it virtually impossible to hold law enforcement accountable for the misuse of deadly force; and

WHEREAS this law and the prosecutorial decisions pursuant to it have contributed to a perception that our law enforcement agencies are able to operate outside the law regarding their use of deadly force; and

WHEREAS the necessarily close working relationships between law enforcement agencies and our public prosecutors contribute to a widespread public perception that prosecutors have a conflict of interest when dealing with allegations of law enforcement misconduct, especially regarding the use of deadly force;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we call for the establishment of independent and broadly representative citizen review boards charged with the responsibility and granted the authority to ensure transparent, fair, and accountable oversight of all law enforcement agencies in the state;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call for amending Washington state's statute on the justifiable use of deadly force by law enforcement (RCW 9A.16.040) by removing the "without malice and with a good faith belief" defense from the statute; by requiring that a subject pose an imminent threat of death or serious injury; and by requiring that the use of deadly force be necessary as defined in RCW 9A.16.010);

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call for the establishment of an independent state-wide special prosecutor with the authority to investigate and file charges in cases involving alleged misuse of deadly force and/or biased policing practices by law enforcement personnel.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call for the state-wide collection of data from all levels of law enforcement and corrections officers on all uses of force, including hand and leg techniques, uses of a deadly weapon, uses of less lethal weapons, pointing of a weapon or electronic control weapon as a threat of force, and any instance in which injury is observed or alleged by the subject; and call for regular reports, not less than annually, to the public by each law enforcement agency of use of force as collected by the state-wide protocol; and

THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that we call for the training program for law enforcement and correction officers in this state to include such core elements as de-escalation techniques, implicit bias training, and a comprehensive program on dealing with people with mental health issues so that officers are trained to deal with people and situations involving such issues in a humane and safe manner.

Submitted at the 34th District precinct caucuses by Regon Unsoeld, Stuart Reed, and Leslie Cushman