

WEST COAST COALITION



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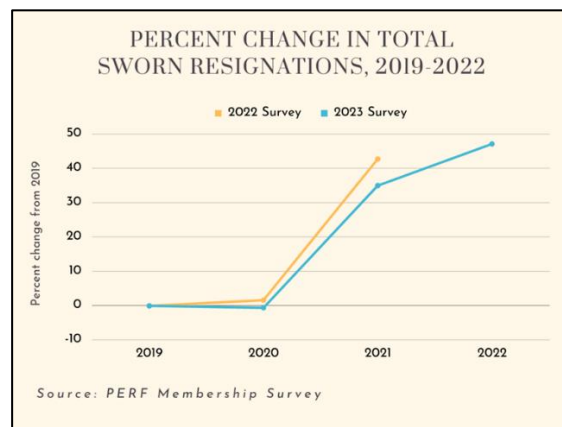
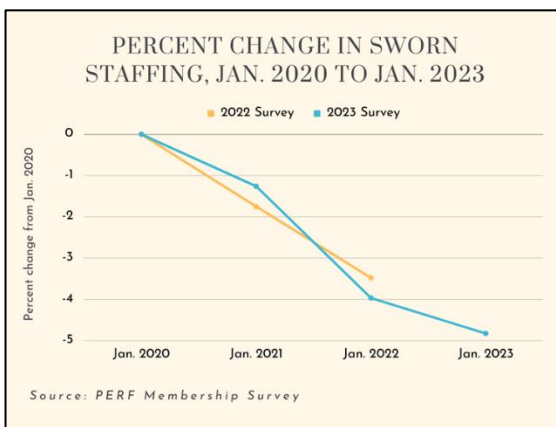
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West Coast Law Enforcement Coalition Returns to D.C. to Advocate for Solutions to Nationwide Recruitment & Retention Challenges

Coalition Representing Officers from California, Washington, Oregon, Hawaii & Alaska Call for Congress to Fully Fund & Staff Law Enforcement Departments Across the Country

Washington, D.C. – The West Coast Law Enforcement Coalition will be returning to Washington D.C. from Monday, April 29 through Wednesday, May 1, to advocate for commonsense public safety reforms to address growing recruitment and retention challenges that are straining law enforcement departments nationwide. Representatives from the six organizations that comprise the Coalition will be in Washington D.C. to advocate on behalf of the West Coast’s rank-and-file and their shared vision for the future of public safety. The staffing challenges facing law enforcement today come from both ends of the career spectrum – while the number of new qualified applicants decreases, retirements and resignations continue to rise.



(Source: [PERF](#))

“Congress needs to act now to improve the current state of law enforcement staffing and funding,” said **Brian R. Marvel, President of the [Peace Officers Research Association of California \(PORAC\)](#)**. “Departments across the country are struggling to stay fully operational, while at the same time the public is fed up over rising crime. We cannot address these issues without adequate funding. The West Coast

Coalition is looking forward to collaborating with lawmakers to find actionable solutions that ensure departments have the support they need to keep our communities safe.”

“When we’re talking about recruitment and retention, we must provide benefits that make qualified candidates want to join and stay in our profession,” said **Aaron Schmautz, President of the [Oregon Coalition of Police & Sheriffs \(ORCOPS\)](#)**. “Preserving retirement security is especially important and is something the Coalition is focused on advancing during this trip. It’s simple – officers who have dedicated their careers to public safety deserve to receive the benefits they paid for, just like any other American.”

“We need support from the federal government so that law enforcement officers can work and retire with dignity,” said **Christopher Tracy, President of the [Washington Council of Police & Sheriffs \(WACOPS\)](#)**. “With police staffing down and retirements up across the country, we need to pass legislation that will provide current officers with the resources they need, attract the best recruits to the profession, and support those in retirement. Now is the time to work together to get this done.”

The West Coast Coalition will be advocating for several bills and advising on how to increase support for local departments and officers, including the following priorities:

- **Retirement Security:** Being a first responder is physically and mentally demanding, but retirement poses many challenges for officers who seek to realize their full benefits. The Coalition supports the *Social Security Fairness Act* ([H.R. 82, S. 597](#)), which will repeal both the “Windfall Elimination Provision” (WEP) and the “Government Pension Offset” (GPO) so first responders who have paid their fair share into Social Security do not face a major reduction in benefits. The Coalition also supports the *First Responders’ Care Expansion (FORCE) Act* ([H.R. 3725](#)), which will lower the Medicare eligibility age to 57 for first responders to make sure they have access to affordable and reliable health care when their service ends.
- **Child Care Access:** With departments across the country facing critical staffing shortages, it is important to invest in programs that make careers in public safety more accessible for everyone – including those with families. The Coalition is advocating for the passage of the *Providing Child Care for Police Officers Act* ([H.R. 2722, S. 3884](#)), which would establish a pilot grant program to facilitate partnerships between local governments and law enforcement agencies that are working to provide child care services for officers.
- **Mental Health Ridealong:** Establishing programs that partner law enforcement officers with mental health and social work professionals will help to reduce the likelihood of an encounter escalating to violence, and ensure officers are well-supported in keeping communities safe. That is why the Coalition is advocating to pass the *Supporting the Health and Safety of Law Enforcement Act* ([H.R. 4911](#)), which would establish a pilot program to provide grants to mental health centers to place social workers with law enforcement agencies when responding to mental health-related emergencies.
- **Housing Affordability:** Housing costs remain a significant burden for officers, often forcing them to live far from the communities they serve. The Coalition supports the *HELPER Act* ([H.R. 3170, S. 1514](#)) which would amend the National Housing Act to establish a national mortgage insurance program for first responders. Specifically, the bill would allow first responders to access a one-time mortgage on a primary family residence with no down payment and no monthly mortgage insurance premium.

- **Federal Support for Law Enforcement:** The fiscal year 2024 appropriation bills made a \$68 million cut to the COPS Hiring program. As Congress begins to consider funding levels for fiscal year 2025, the Coalition urges members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to increase, or at least maintain, funding levels for state and local law enforcement programs.

“The lack of adequate support for law enforcement has led to a dangerous staffing crisis that poses a threat to the safety of all our communities,” said **Robert Cavaco, President of the [State of Hawaii Organization of Police Officers \(SHOPO\)](#)**. “This moment demands urgent action to support officers with increased resources like housing, child care, and retirement benefits so that we can attract the right candidates for this incredibly difficult job. That’s the least we can do for people who work around the clock and put everyone else’s safety above their own.”

“Law enforcement is facing one of its most challenging moments in recent years – from the rise of illicit fentanyl trafficking to drastic increases in retail theft, we have to work together to find common ground to address issues that are impacting innocent people,” said **Shaun Kuzakin, President of the [Public Safety Employees Association, Local 803](#)**. “We look forward to meeting with elected officials on both sides of the aisle to advocate for legislation that will improve both our profession and public safety nationwide.”

“I’m proud to be joining the Coalition in D.C. to champion legislation that will make a real difference for the wellbeing of our officers and the safety of our families,” said **Darrell Evans, President of [Anchorage Police Department Employees Association](#)**. “Local departments can’t do this on their own. We need federal lawmakers to help mitigate some of these pressures and support the nation’s rank-and-file so we can get back to doing what we do best – keeping our communities safe.”

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About the West Coast Law Enforcement Coalition

The West Coast Law Enforcement Coalition was established in 2023 with the goal of bringing together the law enforcement organizations that represent the West Coast’s rank-and-file to advocate for new laws, policies, and programs that will advance the profession of law enforcement and improve public safety nationwide. The West Coast Coalition currently includes four statewide organizations representing California, Oregon, Washington and Hawaii, as well as two local associations representing Alaska.