

WEST COAST COALITION



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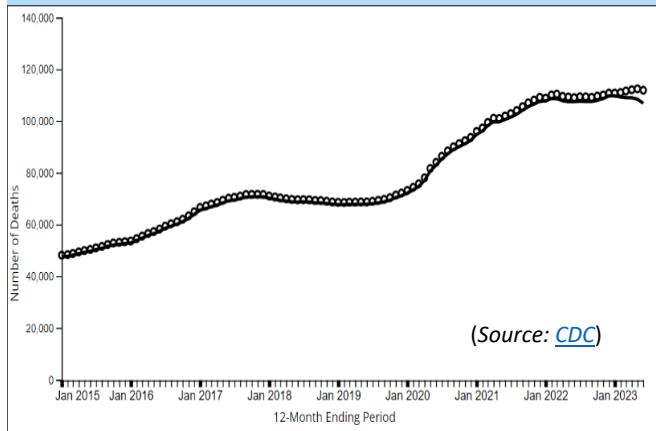
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West Coast Law Enforcement Coalition Expands, Returns to D.C. to Advocate for Commonsense Public Safety Reform

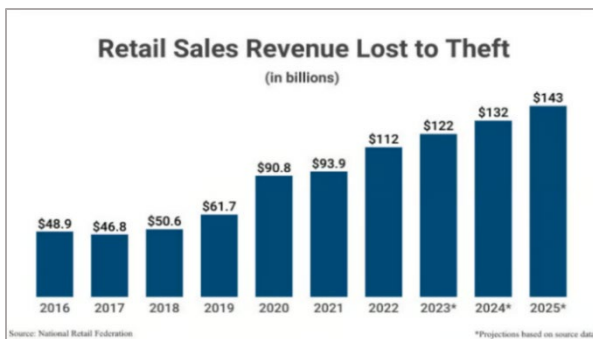
Coalition Representing Officers from California, Washington, Oregon, Hawaii & Alaska Advocate for Increased Federal Support to Address National Public Safety Crisis

Washington, D.C. – The West Coast Law Enforcement Coalition has expanded to include a total of six organizations representing the West Coast’s rank-and-file. The Coalition is returning to Washington D.C. from Monday, December 4 through Wednesday, December 6, to advocate for commonsense public safety reforms to address several growing crises – including the drastic increase in fentanyl overdose deaths across the country as well as the rising wave of national organized retail theft. In addition to these immediate concerns, the Coalition will seek to garner support for new laws, policies, and programs to support peace officers’ mental, physical, and financial wellbeing. The Coalition will be meeting with elected officials and staff, representatives from key committees, the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) office, and other stakeholders to advance their shared vision for the future of law enforcement.

Figure 1a. 12 Month-ending Provisional Counts of Drug Overdose Deaths: United States



“The drastic increases in fentanyl overdoses and organized retail theft present compounding challenges for police departments nationwide. It is imperative that officers are given sufficient resources to handle the increased work that results when crime is on the rise,” said **Brian Marvel, President of the [Peace Officers Research Association of California \(PORAC\)](#)**. “Making headway on these issues will take a coordinated, thoughtful, and collaborative approach at the federal level to ensure that departments can meet these public safety needs.”



(Source: [Capitol One Shopping](#))

“This year Oregon saw the [largest increase](#) in fentanyl deaths than any other state – rising over 67% in the last year at a rate 13x that of the national

average,” said Aaron Schmutz, President of the [Oregon Coalition of Police & Sheriffs \(ORCOPS\)](#). “Our communities are scared, and rightfully so. We owe it to the people we serve to address these issues swiftly and comprehensively to prevent anymore unnecessary deaths in 2024 and beyond.”

“We can’t solve these issues alone. Federal support and funding are absolutely critical to ensure officers can continue to serve and protect our communities during this difficult time,” said Christopher Tracy, President of the [Washington Council of Police & Sheriffs \(WACOPS\)](#). “We need legislation that goes beyond providing departments with increased resources and improved trainings. We need to create statutory enforcement tools that would allow us to effectively curb the harmful distribution of illicit synthetic opioids and the destructive proliferation of organized retail theft.”

The West Coast Coalition will be advocating for several bills and advising on how to maximize support for local departments and officers, on topics including:

- **Combatting Opioids & Fentanyl:** Synthetic opioids, like fentanyl, have become the most common cause of overdose deaths in the United States. Law enforcement need resources to identify and fight the harmful dispersion of these drugs. The Coalition supports the *HALT Fentanyl Act* ([H.R. 467, S. 1141](#)) and the *Combating Illicit Xylazine Act* ([H.R. 1839, S. 993](#)) to address this issue.
- **Preventing Organized Retail Theft:** Physical and online marketplaces are feeling the consequences of the national crime wave as organized retail theft groups harm businesses and put consumers at risk. The Coalition supports the *Combating Organized Retail Crime Act* ([H.R. 895, S. 140](#)), which will expand federal enforcement of criminal offenses related to organized retail crime.
- **Increasing Resources for Law Enforcement:** The Coalition urges Congress to provide necessary funding to ensure departments can maintain adequate staffing levels to increase public safety, address rising crime, respond appropriately to calls relating to individuals with mental illness, improve training, and more. The Coalition actively supports multiple bills on this front, including *The Invest to Protect Act* ([H.R. 3184, S. 1144](#)), *Supporting the Health and Safety of Law Enforcement Act* ([H.R. 4911](#)), *Recruit and Retain Act* ([H.R. 3325, S. 546](#)), *Strong Communities Act* ([H.R. 5029, S. 994](#)), and the *Investing in Community Safety Act* ([H.R. 4246](#)).
- **Supporting Officer Health & Wellbeing:** Amidst ongoing recruitment and retention struggles, and the rise in cost of living, the Coalition is advocating for legislation to support officers and their families, including *The HELPER Act* ([H.R. 3170, S. 1514](#)) and the *Providing Child Care for Police Officers Act* ([H.R. 2722](#)), which would establish a mortgage insurance program for first responders and establish a grant pilot program to provide childcare services for officers’ children, respectively.
- **Ensuring Officers Can Retire with Dignity:** Being a first responder is both physically and mentally demanding – but retirement poses a host of difficulties. The Coalition is advocating for the passage of *The Social Security Fairness Act* ([H.R. 82, S. 597](#)) so first responders who have paid their fair share into Social Security do not face a major reduction in benefits, and *The FORCE Act* ([H.R. 3725](#)) to lower Medicare eligibility to 57 for first responders so they can retire with dignity.

“Soft-on-crime policies are not just ineffective, it has become clear they are having a dangerous impact on our communities,” said Robert Cavaco, President of the [State of Hawaii Organization of Police Officers \(SHOPO\)](#). “If we really want to make a difference in people’s lives, if we are serious about improving public safety for Americans, we need to pass smarter legislation and give officers the resources and training we need to do the job we are being asked to do.”

“We’re excited to join the Coalition to advocate for legislation that will not only improve the law enforcement profession, but also public safety nationwide,” said Shaun Kuzakin, President of the [Public Safety Employees Association, Local 803](#). “We’ve seen firsthand how a lack of officer resources and

staffing has a direct impact on rising crime, which is why it's key that we work together to find actionable solutions that address the public's very real concerns."

"With the heightened national focus on public safety due to the recent rise in crime and fentanyl overdoses, we're proud to join the West Coast Coalition and represent Anchorage's officers in D.C.," **said Darrell Evans, President of [Anchorage Police Department Employees Association](#)**. "This Coalition is giving us the opportunity to voice our concerns directly with federal legislators who can help us make a real difference right here in our local communities."

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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.