



President's Message

Spring 2019

We've come a long way since the position of sheriff originated in ninth-century England. The concept of a county protector made its way to the New World when Virginia appointed Captain William Stone to the job of sheriff (then called "shire") of Northampton in 1634. William Waters became the New World's first elected sheriff in 1652. Today, there are about 3,000 county sheriffs in the United States. Thirty-six of them protect Oregon's counties, as mandated by our state constitution.

The job of sheriff is unique, with a tremendous amount of trust given to us by the people we serve. While aspects of the job have changed a great deal over the years, the basic tenets have not. In Oregon, sheriffs are nonpartisan officials elected by citizens we are sworn to serve and protect. Because our communities elect us, we can make independent decisions on how to best provide public safety, and we can also speak out freely on issues that impact community safety.

The Oregon State Sheriffs' Association was first formed 103 years ago. The Ossa's creation was (and is) driven by a simple and profound idea: Working together, we can provide better and more effective public safety services.

This was so apparent to me at our December 2018 Ossa Awards Banquet in Bend. It was an opportunity for sheriff's offices around the state to join together to honor our heroes. It was humbling to hear stories of honorees' bravery, sacrifice, kindness and bold action that saved lives. These stories also served as stark reminders of what we face every day in this job. It was a reminder of the enormous sacrifices families make for those who serve in law enforcement. We should never take any of this for granted.

Some have been unable to return to work due to the trauma they experienced during their heroic actions. It's a reality of this job that has affirmed my ongoing commitment to make employee wellness a major priority for Oregon law enforcement.

At the December banquet, I was also humbled to take the reins of Ossa president from Hood River County Sheriff Matt English. His stewardship of the organization has been extraordinary. He traveled across the state to meet sheriffs in their communities and worked hard to bring us together in common purpose. I've had the opportunity to work with Sheriff English for a number of years, and I've seen his passion and commitment to help others in times both good and bad. His leadership and kindness have earned him respect across Oregon and beyond. He's set an example for all of us in law enforcement. Matt, you have our thanks.

As I said at the banquet podium, I'm awed by the incredible talent and support of my peers across the state. Sheriff English set a high standard. I look forward to continuing his work as we identify issues and improve public safety together.

As I step into a new role as the Association's president in 2019, I look forward to working on a number of key issues. Here are several priorities we plan to pursue this year, working with Ossa's partners around Oregon:

1. **Training:** In 2018 Ossa launched a video training series on domestic violence cases, designed to reach law enforcement personnel across the state. This year we plan to build on what we learned making that series, expanding our training opportunities on web-based platforms. We've also completed a survey identifying key training needs. Our goal is to provide additional online training across Oregon, covering a number of law enforcement topics and making it easier and more cost-effective to train staff. Ossa's trainings around Oregon have been huge successes, and we believe building on this concept will provide clear benefits for our deputies.

2. **Mental Health:** Our deputies are often the first point of contact with people in mental-health crisis. At least a third of the inmates in any county jail population are struggling with mental health and/or addiction issues, often intertwined. We're working to study and improve encounters between law enforcement and those in mental crisis, with the goal of keeping people out of jail when they might be better helped elsewhere. Ossa will continue to lobby the Oregon Legislature to provide much-needed resources for mental health services.

3. **Wellness:** I believe employee wellness is critical for us to effectively provide public safety services in our communities. Today we deploy a wide variety of tools, including Peer Support, employee assistance, exercise and chaplaincy programs to keep our law-enforcement family healthy in an accelerating world, but there's always more to learn and do. The trauma law enforcement personnel are exposed to over a career, or even on just one call, can have a devastating emotional impact. It's important to educate law enforcement professionals that counseling is a positive way to deal with ongoing exposure to trauma. A workgroup led by Marion County Undersheriff Troy Clausen is working to develop legislation to tackle issues surrounding wellness in law enforcement.

4. **School Safety:** Representing Ossa as chair of the Oregon Task Force on School Safety, I've seen education, public mental health, and law enforcement professionals make incredible strides as they work together to craft joint recommendations for the Oregon Legislature on improving school safety.

Our achievements include the 2017 launch of the hugely successful SafeOregon tip line, administered by Oregon State Police. This year, proposed legislation would establish a Statewide School Safety and Prevention System within the Oregon Department of Education (HB 2327 and SB 584). If approved, this innovative program would create 15 full-time employees who work directly with schools to develop mental wellness and suicide prevention strategies. It would also establish local multi-disciplinary safety assessment teams to respond to threats of violence, with law enforcement playing an important role on these teams.

The Marion County Sheriff's Office has engaged with both adult and youth safety assessment teams for years; they can tell you about the effectiveness of averting violence before it happens. Our children deserve to be safe at their schools.

5. **Managing For Results:** Ossa will also be working this year with Managing Results, LLC to develop a new strategic plan. We believe this will sharpen the organization's focus and ability to effectively serve our membership. I look forward to sharing what we learn from this process throughout 2019.

Ossa is an amazing organization that constantly strives to improve public safety, from patrol to the jail to our courts. None of us are perfect, but I can attest that Oregon sheriffs care deeply about the people we serve and want only the very best for our communities. It truly is about working together to make a difference. We'll have countless opportunities to do that in the coming year.

In closing, I want to thank all the incredible sponsors of this magazine. You represent all of Oregon. Your unwavering support means a great deal, and you have our sincere thanks and appreciation. Please join us in helping get the word out about the Oregon State Sheriffs' Association and the critical work we do. And remember, your thoughts and ideas matter. Please let us know how we're doing and send us your suggestions on improving public safety in Oregon. We're in this together.

Be well and safe. ✨

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Craig Roberts". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Clackamas County Sheriff Craig Roberts
President, Ossa