



Washington State Senate

102 Irv Newhouse Building
PO Box 40428
Olympia, WA 98504-0428

Senator Steve O'Ban
28th Legislative District

Phone: (360) 786-7654
E-mail: steve.oban@leg.wa.gov

March 21, 2018

Governor Jay Inslee
201 Legislative Building
Olympia, Washington 98504

RE: Public Safety/Back Ground Checks/Social Security Numbers/Department of Licensing

Dear Governor Inslee,

I am writing to you with strong concern regarding a recent media report regarding an email sent by the state patrol indicating a new policy that the Department of Licensing will no longer be providing social security numbers to a database maintained by the Washington State Patrol for use by law enforcement. According to the report, law enforcement officials have expressed alarm that this could impact their ability to do routine checks in investigations identifying criminal suspects and obstruct their ability to do background checks for gun purchases and concealed weapons permits required by law. Although my staff is still seeking information regarding this matter, this report is extremely disturbing based on the information already available.

1. **Risk to public safety.** If law enforcement agencies are unable to obtain and confirm basic identifying information, police officer and public safety may be unacceptably compromised. For example, if an officer encounters a potential suspect of a crime who they are unable to clearly identify, checking the last four digits of their social security number may be critical to accurate identification and discovering or confirming that they are dealing with a violent criminal. In addition, according to media reports, law enforcement depends upon using and confirming the accuracy of social security numbers in running background checks for the purpose of determining eligibility for gun purchases and concealed pistol licenses. The report notes that social security numbers serve as an important identifier for mental health records maintained by the Department of Health and Human Services. Banning access to social security numbers may result in the wrong people getting guns and committing acts of violence. It is somewhat ironic after a legislative session in which your administration advocated for increased background checks to reduce gun violence that your administration would establish a policy that undermines the ability of law enforcement to keep guns out of the hands of those already rightly barred from access to firearms, for example, persons with significant mental health issues. I trust your administration will reconsider and reverse this policy.

Page Two
Public Safety/DOL
Governor Jay Inslee

2. Concerns with Process. I am also concerned that your office did not adequately involve law enforcement before the state patrol sent the email regarding the new policy. Because this literally involves a matter of life and death, I would have thought that your office would have first worked closely with law enforcement to better understand the policy's and public safety impacts, but apparently, this was not done. A number of local law enforcement agencies have expressed surprise, and registered their strong concerns with the media.

In sum, I believe public safety is being sacrificed to accommodate ideological interests that have little to do with keeping our officers, deputies and troopers safe, and the public they serve safe.

I respectfully request that you reverse course and ask the state patrol to rescind this ill-considered policy until your office is able to conduct an appropriate review with impacted stakeholders and legislators. Finally, I ask that you provide any legal authority for the new policy.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Senator Steve O'Ban
28th Legislative District
Washington State Legislature