

Resolution Opposing Rollback of Vehicular Pursuit Reform

Whereas, in 2021 the State Legislature adopted [common sense standards for police vehicular pursuits](#), recognizing the need to protect the general public as consistently 10-20% of fatalities from police were from vehicular pursuits, half of those deaths being bystanders or passengers.¹

Whereas that reform allowed police to pursue when there is an imminent threat to public safety, including violent offenses and drunk driving.

Whereas life should always be prioritized over property.

Whereas the current standard simply requires the value of human life be prioritized above the *immediate* return of stolen property or *immediate* apprehension of someone suspected of a lower-level offense.

Whereas there is no evidence that the 2021 laws increased crime rates. Around the country, crime rates started to rise the year before the legislation. General crime rates are also now declining, with the legislation still in place.

Whereas claims that motor vehicle theft are on the rise because of the 2021 laws also have no factual basis. Thefts began rising 18 months before the reforms, and also rose in every state on the west coast where no reforms were enacted.

Table 1: Motor Vehicle Theft Trends in West Coast States Based on National Insurance Crime Bureau Data²

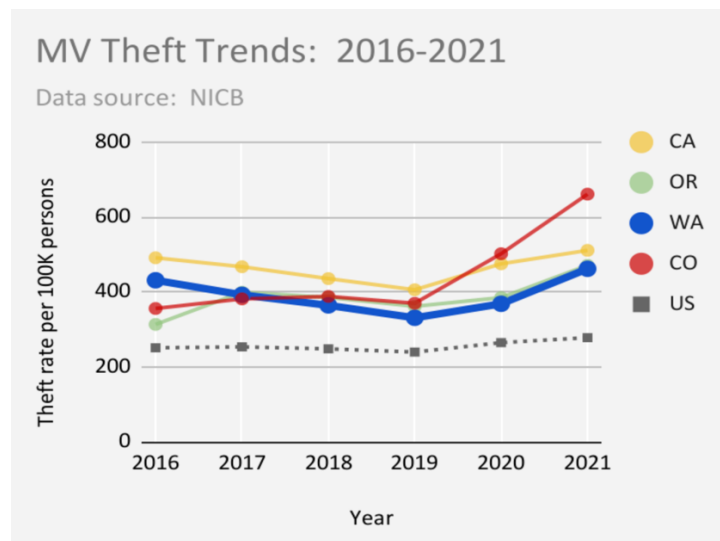
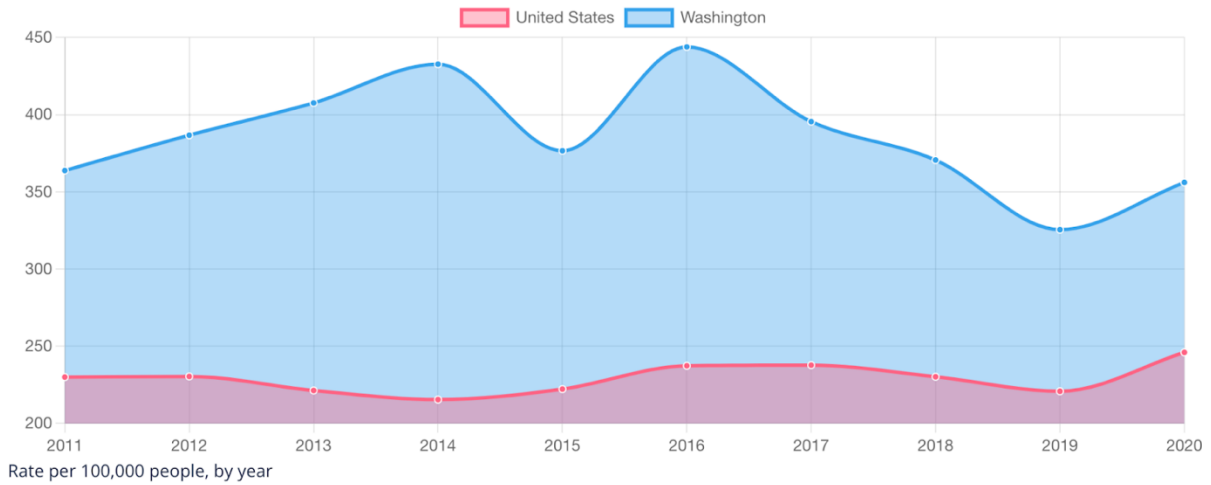


Table 2: Motor Vehicle Theft Increase in WA Before 2021 Law³

Rate of Motor Vehicle Theft Offenses by Population

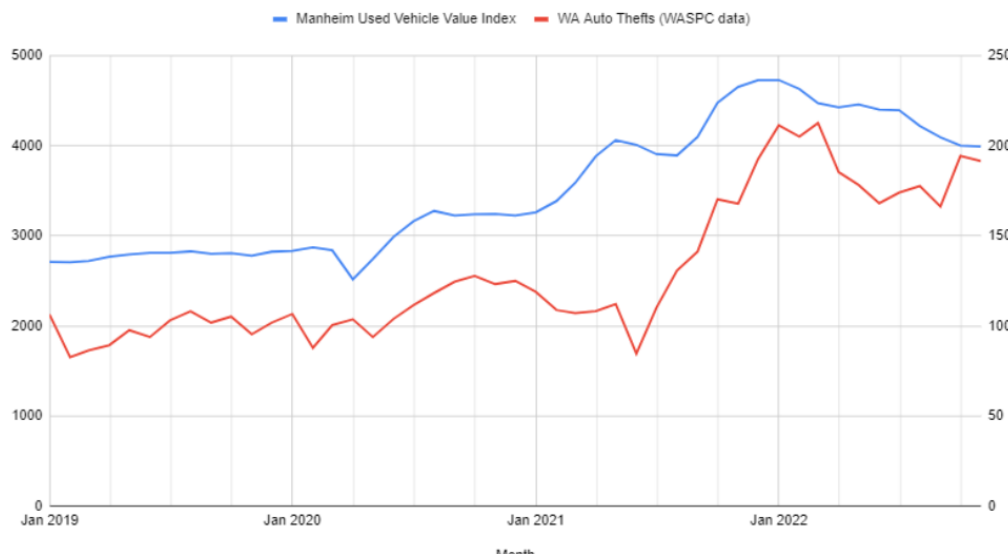


Whereas unsupported and alarmist explanations for crime rates and social problems that double down on failed policies diminish discussion of actual sociological factors and meaningful policy solutions:

Whereas the factor most closely associated specifically with rising vehicle thefts has been the price inflation of used vehicles. Note carefully that the spike in auto thefts began *following, not preceding*, the steep increase in the resale value of used cars:

Table 3: Manheim Used Vehicle Index and WA Auto Thefts⁴

Manheim Used Vehicle Value Index and WA Auto Thefts

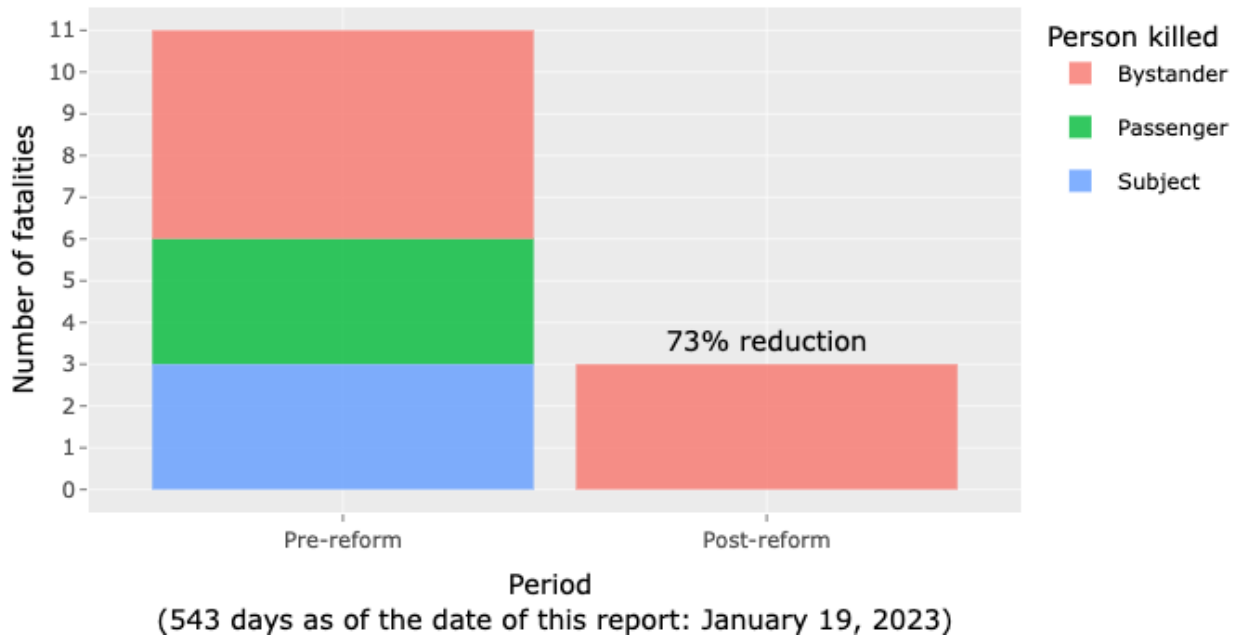


Whereas catalytic convertor theft has declined since adoption of then-Rep. Sharon Shewmake’s bill to close loopholes for purchasing by used auto parts dealers, a

paradigmatic example of a policy that made a successful and fact-informed intervention.⁵

Whereas fewer lives have been lost to police chases in Washington since passage of the 2021 reform bill: three lives lost since passage, versus 11 lost in the same timeframe prior to passage.

Table 5: People Killed in Vehicular Pursuits, Pre and Post Reform⁶
Persons killed in active vehicle pursuits: pre vs. post reform



Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Whatcom Democrats call on members and supporters to reach out to their state legislators to express opposition to the proposed rollback of vehicular pursuit standards, such as HB 1363 and SB 5352 and any similar or successor bill.

Therefore, Be It Further Resolved that the Whatcom Democrats call on the legislators representing Whatcom County from the 40th and 42nd Legislative Districts to instead support establishing a work group to assess and improve the standard *based on actual data*.

Adopted at the March 25, 2023 General Membership Meeting by a vote of 44 to 2.

¹ Total police-involved fatalities data sets and visualizations are available at the journalist-led Fatal Encounters Project <https://fatalencounters.org/>. The Washington Post Police Shootings Database is also a valuable resource <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/investigations/police-shootings-database/>

² <https://www.washingtoncoalitionforpoliceaccountability.com/our-voice/common-sense-limits-on-vehicular-pursuits-are-saving-lives>, from <https://www.nicb.org/news/news-releases/nicb-hot-spots-auto-thefts-significantly-across-country> and <https://www.nicb.org/news/news-releases/nicb-report-finds-vehicle-thefts-continue-skyrocket-many-areas-us>

³ Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Report Data
<https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/explorer/crime/crime-trend>

⁴ Source: WA Coalition for Police Accountability Letter to Rep. Alicia Rule
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aDBOceloSYERtHfBsEgZjiwM0qX0d-A2/view>, See also
<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/06/18/with-car-prices-surging-yours-is-a-prime-target-for-thieves-.html>

⁵ Sorotsky, Brontë, “Catalytic converter thefts decline five months after Washington law takes effect”,
https://www.kxly.com/news/crime/catalytic-converter-thefts-decline-five-months-after-washington-law-takes-effect/article_a59682a0-96e7-57b3-bd34-f06bf5427c6c.html

⁶ Martina Morris, a retired University of Washington sociology and statistics professor, published available statewide data https://rpubs.com/moxbox/wa_pursuits. See also
<https://www.realchangenews.org/news/2022/11/23/data-shows-fewer-deaths-after-restrictions-police-pursuits>.