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**Sent by Electronic and U.S. Mail**

Letter to Washington Sheriffs:

Recent public statements from your colleagues regarding the refusal to enforce Initiative 1639, approved by nearly 60% of Washington voters last November, suggest widespread misunderstanding regarding the requirements and status of the new law.

Examples from news reports include:

- “If someone has guns stolen and then we prosecute them for not storing them correctly, we are re-victimizing that individual.”
- “[My] County is not going to go door to door, and neither are the sheriffs you mentioned. I don’t know really where any sheriff has the time or the opportunity to do all that.”
- “Am I going to enforce it? Yes, but that doesn’t mean I’m going to go to every house and ask if they have a person between 18 and 20 who owns a semi-automatic rifle and where they purchased it.”
- “It’s government intruding into your private home.”
- “The courts will decide it, but in the meantime, I’m not going to go out there and arrest people violating 1639, seize their guns, get them booked into jail ... and they’ve spent thousands of dollars.”
- “How is that fair to that young woman or young man who went to Afghanistan to fight for you and I to have this conversation today for freedom and for our democracy and then to say when you come home you can’t own a firearm until you’re 21?”

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While the language of Initiative 1639 is straightforward, to facilitate a better understanding of what the new law does, and does not, require, my office developed a Frequently Asked Questions document addressing many of the points of confusion in plain language. The FAQ is available at <http://www.atg.wa.gov/initiative-1639>.

A few points are especially important to highlight. Initiative 1639:

- Does not require that a firearm be stored in a particular place or in a particular way;
- Does not require you to enter homes to investigate whether firearms are safely and securely stored. There are strict constitutional limits on when law enforcement can enter your home;
- Does not create criminal liability for a stolen firearm, provided the firearm is reported stolen;
- Does not prohibit a person between the ages of 18 and 21 from possessing a semiautomatic assault rifle provided they have the weapon for defense of their home, business, or personal property, or while hunting or at a shooting range;
- Does require local law enforcement to perform enhanced background checks on all sales and transfers of semiautomatic assault rifles regardless of your personal views on the initiative; and
- Has not been found by any court to violate the Second Amendment.

I hope this document is helpful to you and the Washingtonians you represent and serve.

Sincerely,



BOB FERGUSON  
Attorney General

RWF/jlg