Sheriff Udell, Press Release, June 25, 2020

The recent mandate by the Governor for the wearing of masks/face coverings throughout the state, with more stringent restrictions for Yakima County, has again put pressure on local law enforcement. A recent media headline and article missed the mark on my enforcement position as the Yakima County sheriff, so a clarification is needed.

The Yakima County Sheriff’s Office will not be enforcing the recent face covering order. From the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, my position has been engagement and education over enforcement. It is a position shared by law enforcement throughout the state. Deputies will not be stopping, detaining, citing, or arresting people who are in public without a face covering. My position on enforcement has not changed since the beginning of the controversial rules from our state government.

I believe government’s role is to suggest and persuade the people towards safe practices, not to use force to change behaviors. To do so causes a loss of trust in the government, and local law enforcement can only do our job if the people trust us. I support the individual’s right to determine the level of safety each one of us chooses, free of the threat of government intervention. I believe people will do the right thing for their family, friends, and community.

Individual liberty, even in times of crisis, is what sets our nation apart from the rest of the world. The Yakima County Sheriff’s Office has no interest in restricting the civil liberties that are enumerated in the United States Constitution.

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