

February 13, 2019

To the Editor:

When we elect public officials, including sheriffs, they take an oath of office to faithfully execute the law and uphold the constitution. Yet several sheriffs in Washington are refusing to enforce provisions of I-1639 which nearly 60% of voters approved in November 2018, the sheriffs are substituting their personal opinions for the law.

Like all laws passed by the people of Washington and their representatives, I-1639 is presumed constitutional. Local law enforcement officials are entitled to their opinions about the constitutionality of any law, but their duty is to enforce the law and protect the public.

Starting July 1 of this year, local law enforcement must conduct an enhanced background check for the purchase of semiautomatic rifles. Law enforcement currently and for many years has performed this same background check for handgun purchases to make sure that dangerous individuals do not obtain weapons. State law provides immunity to local law enforcement who run these checks "in good faith",

According to our state Attorney General Bob Ferguson, in the event a police chief or sheriff refuses to perform the background check required by I-1639, they and the county they work for could be liable if there is a sale or transfer of a firearm to a dangerous individual prohibited from possessing a firearm and that individual uses the firearm to do harm, Thus, the taxpayers of the city or county are forced to assume the financial risk of nonenforcement, which could run to tens of millions of dollars.

We of the League of Women Voters insist that our officials abide by the rule of law rather than personal opinion.

Sincerely,