



For Immediate Release

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Government and Media Relations

May 13, 2024

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WSP Graduates 9 New Troopers **New Lateral Class Training Program Opens Opportunities for Lateral Hires for First Time in Agency's 103-Year History**

OLYMPIA, Wash. – The Capitol Rotunda saw the culmination of several years of planning this afternoon when Governor Jay Inslee and Chief John R. Batiste presided over the swearing-in of nine new troopers. The new troopers were all lateral hires, each of whom having previously served in other law enforcement agencies. Five of the newly commissioned troopers have served in federal law enforcement, one served in another state police organization, and three served in local police departments. All of them are now fully trained and duly authorized to execute the duties of the Washington State Patrol (WSP).

The move comes in response to hiring and retention challenges felt by law enforcement agencies across the country. “We need more great people to join our agency who’ll help us continue to meet the needs of Washingtonians,” said WSP Chief John R. Batiste. “The bottom line is we have to think outside the historical box and still maintain the high standards for which our agency is known. Each of these nine has already proven they have what it takes to be a modern law enforcement officer, and each has already served their nation, their state, and their communities with distinction. It is a true honor to be serving with each of these fine professionals today and I welcome them aboard with open arms.”

With the passing of House Bill 1638 during the 2023 legislative session, WSP has the budget to hold two lateral classes in response to the current and anticipated agency needs. The next lateral class is scheduled to begin in March of 2025 and WSP has already begun its recruitment efforts. The agency is hopeful to have as many as 40 lateral hires in the succeeding class. The agency currently has a 149 vacancies in its trooper ranks with an additional 50 -100 vacancies in specialty commissioned roles such as supervisors, detectives, pilots and command staff. Recurring Trooper Basic Training Classes will continue adding new hires regularly. However, with regular attrition coupled with increased competition from other law enforcement agencies experiencing similar staffing shortfalls, the lateral hiring program is needed to make headway in the overall vacancy rate.

“When we looked at our staffing levels across the agency, we determined our typical trooper basic classes just weren’t enough,” said WSP Assistant Chief Shannon Bendiksen. “This was one of the ideas that came forward ... and we certainly want to try something new to supplement our staffing levels in the field.”

A lateral hire is an applicant who is already a certified law enforcement officer. Such hires already completed a training academy, meaning lateral hires undergo a shortened training prior to graduating as a WSP trooper. The hiring process for laterals mirrors that of trooper cadets, including a thorough background check, polygraph, and psychological evaluation. While the exact duration of the training depend on each lateral hire’s credentials and experience level, the average class length involves four weeks of classroom and a four-week coaching trip working alongside a senior trooper. Out-of-state hires undergo an additional two-week academy focused on Washington State law.

The new troopers and assignments are:

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|---------------------------|------------|
| NOAH CAMERON | SHELTON |
| CAMERON CASSANI | BREMERTON |
| AUSTIN FOLEY | KELSO |
| DAMAN FRAKES | GOLDENDALE |
| LEVI GUNDRACKER | SHELTON |
| HUNTER NOX | BREMERTON |
| DANIEL OSBORN | SHELTON |
| MACKENZIE RAY | TACOMA |
| LARRY JONES (LJ) SANTIAGO | TACOMA |
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State Supreme Court Chief Justice Steven C. González swears in nine new troopers in the Capitol Rotunda.

These nine were the first ever lateral hires in WSP history.

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