



*****For Immediate Release*****

Captain Deion Glover
Government and Media Relations

Sept. 27, 2023

Contact: Chris Loftis, Communications Director

Phone: (360) 485-3983 (cell); (360) 596-5023 (office)

Email: Chris.Loftis@wsp.wa.gov

WSP hiring lateral officers for first time in agency history

OLYMPIA, Wash. – The Washington State Patrol (WSP) is accepting lateral hires for the first time in the agency’s more than 100-year history. 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, that they’ve long enjoyed and expect from us,” said WSP Chief John R. Batiste.

With the passing of House Bill 1638 during the 2023 legislative session, the WSP has been budgeted to hold two lateral classes over the next biennium in response to the current and anticipated agency needs. Among commissioned officers, the WSP currently has upwards of 250 openings between vacancies and expected retirements.

“When we looked at our staffing levels across the agency, we determined our typical trooper basic classes 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 try 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 will undergo a shortened training prior to graduating as a WSP trooper. The hiring process for laterals will mirror that of trooper cadets, including a thorough background check, polygraph, and psychological evaluation.

The WSP is aiming have 40 lateral hires in time for the inaugural class slated to begin in March 2024, with a second class is expected to be later in the year.

While the exact duration of the training will 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 will undergo an additional two-week academy focused on Washington State law.

In another first-time for the WSP, the agency is now also offering hiring incentives to new commissioned applicants. Trooper cadets can now receive up to \$10,000 in hiring bonuses, while laterals can receive up to \$20,000.

To learn more about the WSP's lateral program, please visit www.wsp.wa.gov/lateral-class.

###