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## Ron Parsons

United States Attorney for the District of South Dakota



Ron Parsons is the 42nd United States Attorney for the District of South Dakota. As U.S. Attorney, Mr. Parsons is the chief federal law enforcement officer for a district comprising the entire State of South Dakota, including nine Indian Reservations. He currently serves on the Attorney General Advisory Committee's Terrorism and National Security, Native American Issues, and Elder Justice Subcommittees. He lives with his wife, Elizabeth, and their two children in Sioux Falls.

## Michael A. Keller

Chief of Police, City of Andover, KS



Chief "Mike" Keller was appointed as Police Chief of the Andover, Kansas Police Department on May 14, 2007, after serving 5-years as the Chief of Police in Wellington, Kansas. Prior to Wellington, Chief Keller spent 21 years with the Wichita Police Department, where he earned the rank of Lieutenant and commanded a number of sections including Traffic, Patrol, Training, Community Policing and Community Affairs. Additionally Chief Keller has been awarded three Bronze wreaths of Valor and Two Bronze Wreaths of Merit for acts of dedication and bravery.

Chief Keller is a graduate of the 222nd Session of the FBI's National Academy, a graduate of the 2004 Kansas Police Administrator School, Leadership Butler (Class of 2009), and the 2010 Rural Executive Management Institute. Chief Keller is an Ethics and Diversity instructor and currently serves on the Butler Community College's Criminal Justice Advisory Board. Additionally, Chief Keller is heavily involved in the community, serving as an Advisory Board Member for the Andover Police & Fire Foundation, a member of the Andover Rotary Club and a Paul Harris Fellow, and a member of the national Fight Crime: Invest in Kids program. In October of 2009, Chief Keller was appointed Governor Mark Parkinson to serve on the Kansas Commission on Peace Officers' Standards and Training (KSCPOST) and re-appointed to the commission in 2012 by Governor Sam Brownback where he served until July of 2016. Additionally, Chief Keller has been an active IACP and KACP member for 18 years, serving as the Association's treasurer from 2007-2010, Vice President in 2010-2011 and again in 2017-2018, and twice the President, in 2011-2012 and again in 2018-2019. Additionally, Chief Keller was appointed and currently serves as the Kansas association's national SACOP representative.

Chief Keller holds a Master Degree in Administration of Justice with an emphasis in Education from Wichita State University, and a Bachelor's Degree in Administration of Justice from Wichita State University. He is a veteran of the United States Air Force and a native of Utica, New York.

Chief Keller was the recipient of the 2015 "Officer of the Year" award.

**FROM: CHIEF MICHAEL A. KELLER  
ANDOVER KANSAS POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**DATE: MAY 14, 2020**

**TOPIC: CHALLENGES LAW ENFORCEMENT FACE IN RURAL AREAS**

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Honorable Commission Members,

My name is Michael Keller, and I have been in law enforcement for over 40-years. I started my career in 1977 as a reserve officer in a small 12-member police department before joining the Wichita Police Department in 1979, the single largest law enforcement agency in the State of Kansas. I retired from the Wichita Police Department in 1999 after almost 21-years of service, and now have been a Chief of Police for a small rural law enforcement agency for over 18-years, with a sworn staff of 26 officers that serves a community of 13,000. I highlight this part of my resume because I believe it's important to demonstrate that I have experienced and have seen the issues and challenges in law enforcement, both from the large agency perspective, as well as from the small rural agency.

Much of what you are going to hear from me today, about the needs of small rural agencies, you heard last week during testimony from Sheriff William Brueggemann from Nebraska. Certainly there will be no surprises. Law enforcement agencies all have unique challenges individualized to their agency and their respective communities. And there are some significant law enforcement challenges that all agencies share, both large metropolitan agencies and small rural agencies! But small rural law enforcement agencies generally have many of the exact same issues and challenges that the larger agencies have, drugs, dealing with mental health issues, recruitment and retention, technology, training, etc. etc. But the one significant, constant difference is that the small rural agencies generally do not have the funding and resources available like the larger agencies have to deal with these challenges.

In 2019, under the guidance of Director Keith, the COPS Office partnered with the U.S. Attorneys' Office, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), and the National Police Foundation to conduct listening sessions with rural law enforcement leaders in five (5) states (South Dakota, Oklahoma, Utah, Iowa and Montana). The purpose was to hear personally about the challenges rural law enforcement departments face, and to identify and assess their most pressing needs. In late 2019 the COPS Office published "Concerns of Rural Law Enforcement: What we Heard from the Field." What the study pointed out was that rural law enforcement agencies share many of the same top issues/challenges that the larger agencies and communities have. However, often they don't have the funding or resources to deal with them.

"Concerns of Rural Law Enforcement" (Findings)

- Increase of opioid and methamphetamine related suffering and crime (Drugs)
- Recruitment/Retention problems (competing with urban police department salaries)
- Expense of Technology (body worn cameras, mobile computers, and license plate readers)
- Lack of resources for dealing with mental health issues
- Time consumption and other difficulties of applying for grant funding

After being asked to be a part of “Rural and Tribal Law Enforcement Working Group”, I took it upon myself to poll about twenty (20) rural Police Chiefs in Kansas and asked them similar questions. What I found was no surprise, that the rural law enforcement agencies in Kansas share many of the same issues/challenges as those in the other states.

#### Kansas Top Challenges for Rural Law Enforcement Agencies:

- Recruitment/Hiring (Difficult to Compete with larger agencies (Salaries, Benefits, Promotional Opportunities)
- Mental Health Resources (one rural city reported a 61% increase on mental health related calls in 2019 from the prior year.)
- Drugs (Marijuana legalization/Opioid Epidemic, etc.)
- Inadequate Funding (need more federal grants to fund additional staffing, technology and training)
- Lack of Quality Training

#### Inadequate Funding/Lack of Resources

It is fairly common knowledge that about half of our law enforcement agencies in the United States have fewer than 10 officers, according to a 2015 report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, and a significant number of our law enforcement agencies, approximately 70 percent, are the smaller agencies that serve communities of fewer than 10,000 citizens. But federal funds and grants are not always available to the smaller agencies consistent with the larger agencies for a variety of reasons. Often times the smaller agencies do not have the resources, knowledge and/or expertise to even submit for a grant, much less handle the normal tracking and reporting that follow the actual award of a grant. While many of the larger agencies have full-time staff, dedicated to researching and seeking out grant opportunities, as well as, expertly trained grant writers to prepare and submit thorough and well written grant proposals, greatly increasing their odds of success, while for the smaller rural agencies, it is often the Police Chief, a detective, or even an officer that is tasked, over and above their normal duties, with finding, researching, writing and submitting their grants.

The need for federal grant funding is so much more needed by the rural law enforcement agencies. Many rural law enforcement agencies struggle to even provide basic equipment that their officers need, equipment such as vehicles, weapons, bullet proof vests, working portable radios, etc. Many times, without federal assistance, there is no money left for technology upgrades and purchases such as in-car cameras, body cameras, drones, license plate readers, or even current and quality training.

Federal grant funding needs to be made more readily available and accessible, as well as more proportionally distributed to the smaller rural agencies, so that the smaller agencies can compete with the larger agencies in providing an equal and quality law enforcement service to their communities.

#### Mental Health Issues and Resources

Police are often the first responders to individuals dealing with mental illness issues, and in rural communities may be the only responder. According to the Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, approximately 1,000 people in the United states were shot by police officers

during 2018, and people with mental illness were involved in approximately 25 percent of those fatalities. And the rural law enforcement agencies are dealing with those same individuals in the smaller communities. One rural city in Kansas reported a 61% increase in mental health related calls in 2019 from the prior year.

And as it stands right now, things are only going to get worse. The COVID-19 pandemic is pushing America into a mental health crisis that we aren't prepared to address. Social isolation, financial distress, fears about health and an uncertain future are worsening symptoms for people with mental health conditions and causing new mental health challenges for many others. Many departments, small and large are reporting their calls involving suicidal subjects over the past couple of months have more than doubled from this same time period a year ago. My own department has seen a 185% increase in suicidal subject calls from a year ago.

Not only do many of the small rural law enforcement agencies not have the necessary training to deal appropriately with individuals dealing with mental health issues, many agencies do not have the resources either. Many times, if an officer has to take an individual into protective custody because they are a danger to themselves or others, that officer is tied up with that individual for several hours. And, if the individual is actually committed to a secure facility, many times the rural law enforcement officer will be the one to transport the individual to that facility, which may be hours away from the officer's jurisdiction. For our officers, it is a 2-hour, 127-mile one-way trip to transport that subject to a secured mental health facility.

In regards to much needed training for dealing with the mentally ill, the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) is an innovative first-responder model of police-based crisis intervention with community, health care, and advocacy partnerships. The CIT Model was first developed in Memphis and has spread throughout the country. It is known as the "Memphis Model." CIT provides law enforcement-based crisis intervention training for assisting those individuals with a mental illness, and improves the safety of patrol officers, consumers, family members, and citizens within the community. The CIT Model reduces both stigma and the need for further involvement with the criminal justice system.

A recent study led by Michael Compton, M.D., M.P.H. and published in the "Behavioral Sciences and the Law" journal has shown CIT-trained officers have increased usage of verbal negotiations, with referral to mental health units more likely and arrests less likely. However, the study also suggested that assigning all officers to CIT training, "may dilute the value of implementing a CIT program and not produce the outcomes desired." Instead, the study suggests that "agencies may want to consider assigning all personal to basic mental health response training, but reserve specialist CIT training for vetted volunteers."

#### Recruitment/Hiring/Retention

Recruitment, hiring and retention of Police Officers is a national problem that many law enforcement agencies are currently struggling. In recent annual "State Associations of Chiefs of Police" meetings (SACOP - the coordinating body between the state associations and the IACP membership as a whole), during roundtable discussions on law enforcement challenges with Police Chiefs from forty or more states, the recruitment of officers has been one of the top issues for the last several years.

And smaller rural agencies are finding it even more difficult to find and recruit officers into the profession. This is largely due to the smaller agencies not being able to compete with the larger agencies in salaries, benefits and advancement opportunities.

Additionally, the smaller rural agencies are often saddled with the additional problem of retention, because many times their young officers are lured away by the larger agencies. Some officers will come to the smaller agency just to obtain experience and get their basic certification, before transferring to a larger agency for higher salaries, additional benefits, and more opportunities. Smaller, rural law enforcement agencies need financial assistance in being able to compete with the larger agencies to recruit and train officers.

Federal funding and grants should be made available to the smaller rural agencies in order to attract and retain quality police officers. Federal funds and/or grants could be implemented, very much like similar programs that are used to attract doctors and teacher to the rural communities, where by providing hiring bonus programs or student loan forgiveness programs for officers that choose to serve in rural law enforcement agencies.

#### Lack of Quality Training

Rural law enforcement agencies throughout the United States have many of the same training needs as urban law enforcement agencies, as well as unique needs of their own. Training for small rural agencies has its own challenges and is difficult at best. First, many small agencies do not have the funds available to send officers to training. Next, even if the agency does have the funding to send officers to training, they often cannot attend the training because they are geographically isolated in remote parts of the state, and/or don't have the staff available to cover patrol shifts during the officer's absence. And finally, many small rural agencies do not have access to the technology or internet to provide or access remote or quality on-line training.

In the study previously mentioned, "Concerns of Rural Law Enforcement: What We Heard from the Field" conducted by the COP's Office reinforces the national need, stating "the Nation's small and rural law enforcement [agencies] deserve greater attention from the Federal Government!" This national need for rural training will best be met through a national response: the creation of National Rural Law Enforcement Training Centers (NRLETC). At the request of a 2020 solicitation made by the COP's Office, the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center is currently in the process of developing and implementing a "National Rural Law Enforcement Training Center" (NRLETC) in Kansas with the sole mission of developing high quality training tailored to the unique needs of rural law enforcement agencies and the delivery of that training using instructional methodologies that leverage economies of national scale.

Federal funding should be made available to continue and expand the Rural Law Enforcement Training Center program into a regional concept, establishing regional centers throughout the country that will specifically address and meet the unique training needs of small and rural law enforcement agencies throughout the country.

**Recommendations: (Five)**

**Federal Funding Recommendation: That federal grant applications, eligibility criteria and factors determining awards be re-tooled so that the final allocation of federal grant funds are fairly and proportionally distributed between large agencies and small rural law enforcement agencies.**

**Mental Health Recommendation: That additional resources be specifically directed to the small rural law enforcement agencies for the purpose of dealing with the mentally ill, including a mandate or strongly encouraged that all law enforcement officers receive Critical Incident Team (CIT) training, or at a minimum, mental health response training.**

**Recruitment/Retention Recommendation: That a federally funded grant program should be established, similar to doctor and teacher programs, to attract and retain quality police officers in rural communities through hiring bonuses and/or student loan forgiveness programs.**

**Training Recommendation One: That National Regional Policing Training Centers be established, similar to what is being currently developed in Kansas, and federally funded with a single mission of meeting the challenging training needs for rural law enforcement agencies.**

**Training Recommendation Two: That Federal Training opportunities, such as the FBI's National Academy (NA), the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glynco, GA and Homeland Security's Center for Domestic Preparedness re-tool their selection process to ensure that small rural law enforcement agencies receive a fair and proportionate number of training opportunities.**

Sincerely,

*Michael A. Keller*

Chief of Police

Andover Police Department

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*Public Service Excellence through Compassion, Integrity & Commitment*



## John Letteney

Chief of Apex County, NC



John Letteney was appointed Chief of Police for the Apex (NC) Police Department in December, 2012. From 2005 until his appointment in Apex, he served as the Chief of Police for the Southern Pines (NC) Police Department. In 2005, Chief Letteney retired as a Captain/Zone Commander from the Monroe County Sheriff's Office in Rochester, New York, where he was responsible for a police substation as well as law enforcement services for an international airport. During his 38+ year law enforcement career, he has served in patrol, investigations, training, accreditation, tactical operations, inspections and administration.

Chief Letteney is the 3rd Vice President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), and is a Past General Chair for the IACP Division of State Associations of Chiefs of Police (SACOP). He is Chair of the IACP Investigations Policy Council, served as a Mentor for the IACP's New Police Chief Mentoring Project, and has served on several committees. In 2020, he was appointed by United States Attorney General William Barr to the *Respect for Law Enforcement and the Rule of Law* Working Group of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice.

Chief Letteney is a Past President of the North Carolina Association of Chiefs of Police (NCACP), and received their Outstanding Service Award for 2015. He also received the 2013 Outstanding Law Enforcement Executive of the Year award from the North Carolina chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), was honored as the 2017 Chief of the Year by Special Olympics of North Carolina, and was named a "Magnus Gladio Leader" by the National Command and Staff College in 2018.

Chief Letteney obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice from Rochester Institute of Technology, a Master of Public Administration degree from Marist College in New York and an Advanced Law Enforcement Certificate from the North Carolina Department of Justice. Chief Letteney is also a graduate of the Municipal and County Administration Course held at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's School of Government, and is a graduate of both the FBI Command College and the 248th Session of the FBI National Academy.