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Which Do We Prefer: Peace Officer ... or Government Agent

By Richard W. Stevens

Test yourself: Do you think of the men and women in blue who carry the badge as “law enforcement officers”? Or do you call them “peace officers”? What’s the difference?

A “peace officer” is one who serves the people by working to stop criminal activity and to promote a non-violent society of otherwise free citizens.

A “law enforcement” officer serves the government by making sure the people obey its laws and decrees.

See the difference? ***Serve the people*** vs. ***serve the government***.

Nowadays Americans use the term “law enforcement officer” to seemingly upgrade the terms policeman and “cop.” Many of us don’t realize that the new words conceal situations when police officers become government agents.

Case in point: mandatory seat belt laws. In many states, law officers can stop and ticket a driver who is not wearing a seat belt. Those officers are acting as government agents, not as peace officers. Rather than protecting liberty or detecting crimes, those officers are acting to impose the government’s will on people who haven’t done anything to harm anyone.

In the vast number of cases, driving without a seatbelt harms no one. But ... *the law must be enforced*.

Another case in point. Having an unlocked and loaded firearm sitting on the kitchen counter in one’s home endangers absolutely no one – unless a careless or criminal human being gets a hold of it. In states that enact mandatory storage and gun-lock laws, however, officers can “enforce the law” by arresting the owner and confiscating the firearm. *Enforcing the law* thus becomes the police officer’s mission, not keeping the peace.

Police officers take a solemn oath like this one:

"I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully discharge the duties of my office, and that I will uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States from all enemies, foreign and domestic, so help me God. "

This Constitutionally-required oath, Sheriff Richard I. Mack wrote, "carries with it a tremendous responsibility: to uphold and defend the principles of liberty for which hundreds of thousands of Americans have given their lives." That means that police officers and their leaders must understand our Constitution and fundamental rights.

Unfortunately, as Sheriff Mack observed, "after the swearing in ceremony, police academy graduates give little attention to the Constitution. Most police officers have never read the document they have sworn in the name of God to uphold and defend."

That's not all. Sheriff Mack has noted that "today, police are being asked (or ordered) to enforce 'laws' that clearly violate Constitutional rights. Officers have been trained and inculcated to follow orders, and that police are not to interpret laws, just enforce them."

More to fear: federalized police and federal government agents. Local police departments increasingly feel the noose of federal funding tied to federal mandates, and find themselves pawns of a nationalized police control system. Armed federal agents appear everywhere in daily life, enforcing ever more rules, regulations and orders.

Law men and women must remain faithful to their oath and calling to serve the people. "The precious rights secured in the U.S. Constitution have been entrusted to police for safekeeping," Sheriff Mack has said. "Police must never forget the time spent and the price paid to obtain our liberty. They can never relax the fervor with which it must be defended."

Our peace officers cannot do this alone – the citizens must help.

As Sheriff Mack has written, "no police officer, soldier, or any other government official, should in any manner comply with an order that is unlawful or attempt to enforce a mandate that is unconstitutional." ***But how do the officers – or we civilians – know what is unconstitutional?***

Step One: Read the whole Constitution and the Bill of Rights – carefully. Share your knowledge with others. Use the Gran'pa Jack Common Sense booklet – it covers every right protected in the Bill of Rights, with brief history, explanation, examples. A must read for every police officer – and every citizen!

Step Two: **Celebrate Bill of Rights Day on December 15 every year.** It's easy and fun. Contact JPFO at (800) 869-1884 or www.jpfo.org to order booklets, get Bill of Rights Day materials, and learn more.

Check out our sister organization, Concerned Citizens Opposed to Police States at www.ccops.org - learn how to spot and defeat police state policies.

Sheriff Mack's statements quoted from R. I. Mack & T. R. Walters, *From My Cold Dead Fingers*, Rawhide Western Publishing, Safford, AZ (1996).

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