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# In the Line of Duty: Remaining Steadfast in the Face of Adversity

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Since 1999, Women in Federal Law Enforcement (WIFLE) has worked to promote gender equity through acts of leadership, providing training, research, scholarships, awards, and networking opportunities to women in federal law enforcement. The fight to empower women in this community began over 20 years prior at the Interagency Committee on Women in Federal Law Enforcement (ICWIFLE)–a task force created by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) charged with studying the low rate at which women joined federal law enforcement–and WIFLE’s predecessor.

Just as we did in 1978, we continue to recruit, promote, and retain women in law enforcement careers but also embrace diversity and equity, seek inclusiveness, and expect integrity.

After nearly 50 years, the task of fighting for gender equity in a male-dominated field is not unique to law enforcement. What could be, however, is the inequity in law enforcement that puts women’s lives at risk. From agency-issued protective gear that is ill-fitting for women to the lack of maternity leave policies, women continue to serve, despite added risks that their male counterparts may not experience.

Although we at WIFLE do not believe that any organization has a direct impact on the federal workforce of the law enforcement community directly, we do believe in the ability to impact on a personal level.

No one organization or person can change the law enforcement community. What we do is provide opportunities for individual change. We change the minds of people we encounter through consistent and continuous outreach to all. Agencies might contact WIFLE or another organization when they have a specific problem that needs a solution; however, once it’s effectively solved or has a band-aid fix, the federal government moves on to the next problem. By providing members of law enforcement with the opportunity to expand their horizons and help them navigate their careers, we help make better and more resilient leaders. Those are the people that change our profession. We help develop the people that think about changing the future and being better law enforcement officers.

Is this an efficient way of instituting change? No, it’s inefficient, and change becomes generational, which is incredibly slow and frustrating. The people we influence today may not have the ability to change the community for ten or fifteen years, and it doesn’t happen with one person. It is when a group of leaders comes together. Is that an efficient way of changing the profession? No, it isn’t, but the change becomes the change that lasts because it is incremental and it is through consensus.

In the meantime, what do we do? Take up space in the federal law enforcement community and the federal workforce for women. WIFLE remains steadfast in our mission to aid women in their duty to the law and public safety. Perhaps you too can choose to lead people and lead change to make our profession better.

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