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THE RRR PARTY



The ABCs of DWI Pitfalls of Property Seizure

With an unusual sense of haste, the Governing Body ran a midnight marathon, rushing a decision on a new DWI seizure program. The urgency with which this was pushed through was flabbergasting. Many Governing Body members were not notified this could be on the agenda in advance of receiving their packets a week earlier. No special committee (much touted by this Governing Body). No work session. Pardon me for having the audacity to say that something so serious should be approached with more reverence and thought than Social Media, which was given much more examination and deliberation by this Governing Body.

Clearly, making a solid attempt to crack down on drunk drivers is the right thing to do. But national and state headlines are littered with enough examples of property seizure run-a-muck to give us pause.

Consider under this new ordinance that you loan your car to a friend or relative whose vehicle has broken down. The friend/relative goes to the bar after work and is then stopped at a DWI checkpoint. The vehicle is seized by the police. According to the City Attorney, all you have to say is "I'm an

innocent owner" shifting the burden to the government to prove you are not completely innocent. The government then has to show you had constructive knowledge that the friend/relative might drink and drive. For instance; did you know that person had a DWI 10 years ago? Have you been present when this person drank a few too many? Certainly, we all have to take some responsibility when we lend our vehicle. However, the ordinance uses ambiguous phrases like "may include, but is not limited to..." leaving the impression of stacking the deck against the innocent owner.

This ordinance also prosecutes in a civil rather than criminal capacity, allowing for speedy seizure and forfeiture of a person's vehicle if arrested, not necessarily convicted. A hearing officer (anyone appointed by the City Manager) could hear the case within 20 days, giving the government the authority to complete forfeiture proceedings and sell their car before they are found guilty of a crime. Conversely, the innocent owner of a vehicle only has ten days to request a hearing, and could be without their vehicle for an undetermined amount of time. As yet,

the remaining procedures are still to be determined.

Is vehicle seizure more effective than booting? The City Attorney herself cited a study stating that booting vehicles is more effective. She also acknowledged that Albuquerque's seizure program did not result in any real decrease in DWI over the years and predicted that Rio Rancho may not even see a reduction for years. Habitual offenders always find a way to outsmart the system, unless they are locked up. In addition, a large percentage of vehicles have lienholders who, protected by law, recover the vehicle and often return it to the offender.

Some Governing Body members are diving head-first into the murky waters of property seizure when they should be dipping their toes and carefully considering any unseen rocks beneath the waves. It is their responsibility to ensure as little collateral damage as possible; protecting the rights of the innocent while punishing the guilty. Let's not make the mistake of adding the lives devastated by heavy-handed government to those shattered by DWI.

To Tech or Not to Tech

To tech or not to tech? That is the question. Many schools across the nation jumped on board with the one-to-one initiative, moving students to iPads instead of textbooks.

Some say that incorporating technology into the classroom engages our tech-savvy kids; others believe textbooks are the old

standard to stick with.. One thing is clear to parents who have had children spanning the last 10 years in RRPS - textbooks have

To Tech or Not to Tech cont'd

slowly vanished from our students' homework routines. Paper, too, has disappeared. Like water in the Mojave Desert, paper is gold to teachers who are given paper rations and have to come out of pocket for the rest.

Acknowledging that cost is paramount, let's assume for a moment that over the course of 3 years there is a break-even point between the use of textbooks/paper and computer tablets. Moving entire school systems to this format is no easy task; teachers are already consumed with student assessment tests and fear losing their jobs because of poorly performing students. Understandably, some view incorporating this technology as burdensome, but there are lessons to be learned from those who have gone before us.

Some school districts that have been using iPads are now switching to Chromebooks because they are much cheaper to purchase and maintain, and the learning curve for the teachers is not as high with PC. Due to the strain of training teachers to fully utilize tab-

lets, schools are easing the transition by picking one grade to start with as a pilot program. Other considerations are the possibility of damage and theft.

Opponents also argue that students who learn from physical textbooks retain more



because of the way the brain processes the information they see. Proponents believe that technology encourages kids because it is the medium they are already immersed in and can expand upon. Many teachers are already independently incorporating tech-

nology by having students use their smart phones during class to take interactive quizzes. If fully utilized and mastered, there are endless potential learning tools with tablets.

Every generation has those who resist or embrace change. "Tablets vs. textbooks" is our modern day version of "horse and buggy vs. automobile". There is always a trade-off. I, myself, went kicking and screaming from the texture and scent of real books to the cold slim lines of Kindle convenience. But I did go. It's where the next generation has already been and won't likely return from.

Whether the funding for this transition is comparable or equitable remains to be seen, yet lingering in the air like rotten eggs is the amount of waste inherent in government, evident in the hundreds of computers recently purchased by RRPS for the sole purpose of administering the PARCC exam (another assessment test).



02/03/15 AGENDA

Logic in Legislation
DWI Seizure Ordinance
Join us for a "point/counterpoint" discussion on this issue.

Eye on Education
UNM West Watch
UNM West President Wynn Goering talks about the status of our campus.

Protecting Your Pocketbook
Soil Stabilization Project
New possibilities in dirt road management.

Open to the Public! Everyone welcome!

Heads Up!

Soil Stabilization Program

This month the City Public Works Department began a pilot program using a promising new system to manage dirt roads. If successful, we could see this in use on more dirt roads throughout Rio Rancho in the future.

The Public Works Director declined our invitation to speak on this issue, but we think it is important to let the public know about it. We'll give you more information at the February meeting.

