



DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dale J Schmidt Sheriff Scott Mittelstadt Chief Deputy

March Sheriff's Column

Where does the money go when a traffic citation is issued?

As the sheriff's office continues to conduct extra traffic enforcement in our efforts to reduce traffic fatalities and serious crashes, I often hear statements that we are only doing this to generate revenue. I also hear the similar assumption that there are quotas that need to be met. Both of these statements couldn't be further from the truth. This month I will explain where forfeitures from citations actually go. Next month I will explain our duty regarding traffic enforcement how quotas are illegal in the State of Wisconsin.

In order to explain citation forfeitures, let's break one down. One of the most common citations issued is a citation for speeding. An ordinance citation for driving 70 mph in a 55 mph zone will result in a forfeiture of \$175.30. This amount is set by the State of Wisconsin and not the law enforcement agency. Here is a breakdown of where that money goes:

Court support services fee \$68

- To the state to offset county court costs

Base deposit \$30

- Returned to the municipality, not the law enforcement agency

Court costs \$25

- Goes partially to the state and partially to the county where the citation was issued to fund overall justice system costs

Justice information fee \$21.50

- Goes to the state to help computerize the criminal justice system.

Crime lab and drug assessment fee \$13

- Goes to the state to fund crime laboratory activities

Jail assessment fee \$10

- Goes to the county where the citation was issued and is used to construct, remodel, repair or improve county jails

Penalty assessment \$7.80

- Training Fund (Wisconsin DOJ)
- Development of alcohol and drug abuse education programs (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and Department of Health Services)
- Used for anti-drug enforcement and youth diversion programs (Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance)
- Training correctional officers (Wisconsin Department of Corrections)
- Funding Programs (Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance)
- Program funds (Wisconsin Department of Justice)

None of these fees go to fund any of the operations of our law enforcement agencies who issue the citation. In fact, any money that comes back to the municipality is strictly prohibited from being utilized to fund operations of that law enforcement agency. As a result, the motivation for a law enforcement officer issuing a citation is simply that of a tool to enforce the laws in hopes of providing a deterrent to violating the law.

The simple message I have for you this month is that yes, law enforcement officers issue citations for violations of our traffic laws. That is because it is our statutory duty to do so. We do not enjoy issuing citations, but rather it is simply something we have to do as the threat of a citation deters bad driving behaviors. In order for that threat to be perceived as real, we must issue citations when the law is broken. Help us to reduce the amount of citations that are issued by simply slowing down and following the law.

As your Sheriff, I would love it if no citations ever needed to be issued because that would mean everyone is driving legally and safely. If we work together, we can keep your cash in your pocket, but more importantly we can reduce the severity and number of crashes. It's one more thing we do to keep Dodge County as a safe place to live, work and visit.

Sheriff Dale J. Schmidt