

## Shedding a little light on NM DWI issues

MADD was awarded an \$800,000 [contract](#) in March 2016 to monitor DWI cases. The data they gather already exists. New Mexico has a DWI citation tracking system (CTS); since 1984 all DWI citations issued in the state are tracked, from arrest to administrative license actions to court results (including dismissals). It is a goldmine of New Mexico DWI information. It can tell us what the dismissal rate is at any given time in any court in the state. This tracking system is maintained by the Motor Vehicle Division (MVD) and historically has been analyzed by the NM Department of Transportation's Traffic Safety Bureau (TSB), who awarded the court monitoring contract to MADD. TSB already contracts with [UNM's Traffic Research Unit](#) for approximately \$500,000 annually to do analysis of the CTS data, why award a contract to MADD to monitor and gather already existing data? MADD had been awarded a contract a few years ago from TSB to monitor the courts and nothing came of that multi-million dollar contract either. In other words their 'monitoring' of the courts had zero impact on how the courts handle DWI cases. I will go out on a limb and surmise these awards to MADD are strictly political and nothing more. There appears to be no political will or leadership to change the appalling situation in the courts handling of DWI.

Something never mentioned is the fact that MADD benefits monetarily (in fees) from the courts referring DWI offenders to their DWI Victim Impact Panels – to the tune of about \$100,000 annually. They have a rather obvious conflict of interest.

MADD does a good job of providing support to DWI victims after a crash and accompanying them through the criminal justice system, but that's about it. They are NOT the advocacy organization they once were. Over the years they have been compromised (as in the case of court monitoring) and used as political leverage rather than an organization that can affect positive policy changes.

DWI is not just an impaired driving problem – it's a huge political problem. We have a lack of leadership in the Governor's office and in the Traffic Safety Bureau, where they apparently have forgotten all the research that exists to help guide spending decisions. [Annually, they carry over approximately \\$9 million in funds](#) that could be used to reduce DWI death and injury if they would actually study the data and do real problem solving, then fund solutions based on proven methods to reduce DWI death and injury.

Perhaps that's why they fund redundant projects – giving the appearance of doing something to alleviate impaired driving, while actually accomplishing very little.

Solutions to the DWI issues should include addressing the manpower shortage of officers, how to recruit and retain officers. More should be done to treat alcoholism as a medical condition rather than waiting for crimes to be committed.

Too many judges are politically disinclined to step out of the box to address the issue in their courts. We have law enforcement officers stretched thin and caught in the game played out in court by the defense in the 'infamous' pre-trial interviews, seemingly with many judges nod of approval, making it appear as if the prosecutors were unprepared or 'officers didn't show' for court hearings. I have monitored the courts for well over 15 years and these problems have persistently plagued the courts.

So, with all the rhetoric from the Governor's office – “we need stiffer penalties”, while dismantling the mental health system and her wanting to ‘hold the courts’ accountable by awarding a contract to MADD, little is accomplished in saving lives. It is beyond time to stop the madness and start holding our Governor, the Traffic Safety Bureau and the courts accountable for the millions of misspent public dollars and keeping our streets dangerous.

[Read the MADD report released on November 20, 2017.](#)