

THE SPOTLIGHT

MURRIETA POLICE DEPARTMENT

LET'S GO TO TRAFFIC COURT

PART ONE OF THREE

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First of all, I would like to welcome the fine citizens of Temecula to the readership of the Insider. For the past year, I've been writing articles on all kinds of subjects selected by the citizens of Murrieta. This column survives on your input. I get many e-mails and calls each month from readers. I invite all of you in Temecula to drop me an e-mail or phone call if you think you might have a suggestion for an article, or can make this column better.

As I promised our Murrieta readers last month, we are going to traffic court this month. This will be a three part series on how traffic court works, and how to fight a ticket where you feel you are innocent. I'll throw in some of the humor and unusual things I've seen in court, as well as some helpful information for your case. So let's get started!!!

You see the red lights behind you, you pull over, and today is the day you got a ticket. The officer explains to you why he stopped you and wrote you a ticket. You are mad. This is not making your stressful day any better. You sign your ticket, have short conversation with the officer regarding the ticket, get your questions answered, and drive on down the road talking to yourself. You make a few choice comments to yourself about the officer's demeanor, stature, lineage, genetic make up, his big black boots, those dark sunglasses, helmet and whatever else you can think about. You think about it all day, you talk with your coworkers and friends. As time goes by, and you calm down. You either come to the realization that maybe you actually did commit the violation the officer cited you for, and he or she is really not such a bad and evil person, or you truly believe you are innocent and did not deserve the ticket.

You start looking at your options. Traffic school is an option in many cases. If the violation is not a serious one, and you have not been to traffic school in the last 18 months, you may want to consider pleading no contest, or guilty and taking this option. You still pay the fine on the ticket, but the violation is "masked" from DMV and insurance. The courts will still know about the violation but no one else will.

It is important to understand that traffic school is a pre-trial diversion. If you go to court on the date printed on your ticket, which is your arraignment date, and plead not guilty, requesting a trial, then show up for trial with an officer present, your traffic school options are many times gone. This is very important to understand. If it is traffic school you want, then ask for it up front with the courts.

Let's say traffic school is not an option for you, or you really want to fight a ticket. Next month we'll go all the way back to the traffic stop and look at this thing.

As always, I look forward to hearing from you with your ideas for improving this column, your questions, and your suggestions for future articles in the Murrieta Insider. I receive many calls and e-mails every month and appreciate the feedback. Please feel free to contact me at 951-461-6302 or e-mail at jfroboese@murrieta.org.