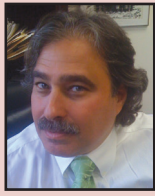


Spotlight / Westchester County

Violations and summonses - Good governance or picking your (the tax payer's) pocket?

Howard Stern



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As a citizen we are all well aware of the ends to which our politicians continue to... well, you decide.

All of us are experiencing the dramatic increase in the enforcement of laws, previously ignored, or those for which warnings were customarily issued. See speed traps; building code violations; parking meters; fire department inspections; etc.

In N.Y.C., if you rent your apartment to a stranger when you are not home (except if you are a rent regulated tenant), you will be fined. A N.Y.C. condo owner was fined \$7,000, after an undercover sting caught him renting his condo through Airbnb for a weekend. The fine was later reduced to \$2,400. What was the safety issue there?

If you are building in N.Y.C. and many other municipalities, inspectors visit the job site looking to issue violations which can result in an immediate Stop Work Order. Under the guise of enforcing safety issues,

inspectors shut down your project. There are two ways to get the Stop Order lifted. Either dismissal by a judge or an administrative law judge (employed by municipality), or pleading guilty and paying a fine on the spot. Since hearings are scheduled months down the road, guilty pleas are the fastest way to get the Stop Order lifted. It's quick money for the municipality.

Municipalities are stepping up

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their enforcement and inspections of buildings, shopping centers and malls. Under the guise of safety (yeah right), their legions of employees (paid for by your tax dollars) descend upon your property en masse. Inspectors show up from buildings, fire department, board of health, sanitation, code enforcement and so on. Where warnings were once written (say for a burnt out exit sign light bulb), now only a summons asking for a fine will do. In some states a corporation or LLC can only appear by legal counsel. Therefore, there is

more incentive for the owner to just pay the fine.

Recently, in a well covered case in N.Y.C., a police officer stated that there was a quota in place to write summonses. A quota!

Now, where do your fines go? Political patronage is big. That means jobs that need new employees (picked by the politicians), resulting in more union workers with pensions and benefits, which means more sympathetic

contributors or set up a loved one in a cushy doing nothing job. Or those people set up a not-for-profit, funded by your tax dollars. Or politicians' friends or loved ones are hired for top level or newly created jobs with the money from your fines and tax dollars and these people are paid a large salary (with benefits) often disproportionate to their work. Or the politician who writes off personal expenses against their office accounts. They sure do

paigms receive taxpayer dollars through matching funds, so it's your money.

Think about how much of the over \$4.2 billion spent on the 2012 Presidential election was matching tax dollar funds? How many family members, friends and contributors were paid or benefited from those matching funds?

It's your money they are spending. Wait, donors you say? Where do the donors get some of their money to donate? Right, government projects.

Ok, so what is my point, you ask. To vent? No. Although I must admit I feel better. I don't expect change. Americans will continue to vote in greedy and career politicians and the cycle will continue.

My point is to get each owner to mobilize their appropriate personnel, to immediately do a comprehensive walk through their properties looking for potential issues or known violations and correct them before your municipality gives you a costly summons. If it's a gray area issue, fix it! Oh, and vote! Please.

So, good governance? Or picking your pocket?

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voters for the politician who created the job or hired the worker. See also the massive police presence around way too many elected officials. Those are detectives and those detectives drive the politician and their additional expensive "chase" cars. In 24/7 shifts.

Please Google: Arrests of politicians. How many have been arrested, convicted or pleaded guilty of all manner of misconduct in your area? Whose money was involved in those misdeeds? Yes, your fines and tax dollars. Politicians reward loyal

eat out a lot.

Now don't leave out politicians who take bribes, or work to enact special legislation to help a large political contributor, or a family member, at your expense? Or that congresswoman whose special fund she created and funded with public money to put needy kids through college was used for, yes, her granddaughter.

Or the congressman, a son of a nationally known religious leader, who pleaded guilty to using campaign monies on himself for luxury goods.

Remember many of these cam-

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