



ACLU Pushes Model Car Impound Policy

Our ACLU chapter, in cooperation with other groups, continues working on the issue of car impoundments by police agencies in Sonoma County.

The seizure of cars of unlicensed drivers, while appearing to be part of unbiased law enforcement, causes great hardships for people of low income and especially immigrants who are unable to obtain driver's licenses.

The 30-day impound imposed by police - with a cost to the driver of \$2,000 or more - is an option available to law enforcement that is NOT required by state law in many cases.

After meeting with Santa Rosa Police Chief Tom Schwedhelm in January, the ACLU proposed a model impoundment policy that was taken under review by City Attorney Caroline Fowler.

Recently, the ACLU chapter has talked with representatives of the Committee on Immigrant Rights, NAACP, and the Peace and Justice Committee, who have endorsed the policy, as well as other community groups in an effort to unify our efforts on this issue.

Patricia Sheehan of the NAACP took the lead in requesting a list of the eight towing companies used by the City of Santa Rosa and the rates charged.

In a [letter](#) sent to City Attorney Fowler and Chief Schwedhelm April 23, the ACLU outlined a model impound policy, citing those adopted by other California jurisdictions and based on a common-sense approach to public safety as well as humanitarian concerns. The letter was signed by Amalia Greenberg Delgado, attorney for ACLU-NC; Michael Kaufman, attorney for the San Francisco-based Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights; and Marty McReynolds, Sonoma County Chapter Chair.

We hope to expand the focus from Santa Rosa to Petaluma and other jurisdictions impounding cars.

Public support is needed to persuade city councils and police departments to change their policies. You can help by speaking out and writing letters to the editor. We need to raise our voices against the chorus of anti-immigrant hostility we hear around us.

[For more information](#)