Subject: DUI Laws
Posted by Wayne Parham on Tue, 20 Jan 2004 09:17:24 GMT
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What do you think about DUI and public intoxication laws? I'm talking about things like driving while under the influence, public drunk, having actual physical control of a vehicle while under the influence, etc.I haven't had a drop to drink or any drug more powerful than an aspirin for almost 15 years, so I think it's fair for me to state my indifference to such laws. It can't be seen as some kind of justification, because I'm a teetotaler and I'm not defending any desire to drink or use drugs. But I still think that some of these laws border on "thought police" style control.Like Sam Kinison used to say, "you don't get drunk hoping to plow into a family of six." I don't want to see that happen, but I'm not sure that setting a blood alcohol limit as low as 0.08% or even 0.1% is appropriate. That's like two beers. I don't know about the rest of you, but I know lots of folks that drive a hell of a lot better after two beers than a lot of other folks do stone cold sober. For that matter, lots of people drive so poorly that you'd have to drop acid and drink a fifth to drive as bad as they do. And now that I think about it, I'm not even sure that would do it.So why do we use something like blood alcohol limits as an indicator of performance rather than directly measuring performance? It is sort of a way to convict a person of driving poorly even when they haven't? Same with public drunk - It is like you convict a person of bad behavior under the pure presumption that the things they have ingested will make them obnoxious or dangerous. But is this reasonable? Is it fair? Should we also incarcerate manic-depressives that haven't taken their meds? How about people that are just grumpy or excitable?No one wants an unsafe person on the roads, and most don't want a violently obnoxious person out in public. Surely, it is easy to test for blood alcohol levels, and that's probably the reason why it's done. A quick field sobriety test is obviously easier to do than a real driving test. But does the fact that it is easier really make it right? How many freedoms are we willing to sacrifice for "safety?"