

# Las Vegas Bail Bondsmen Claim City Stealing Business

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Las Vegas bail bondsmen are claiming that a new city program is not only taking money out of their pockets, but also violating a few bail laws at the same time. In a June 27th article by the Las Vegas Review Journal, that was echoed and editorialized by the [The Las Vegas Bail Bonds Journal](#), a shot was figuratively fired across the bow of the City of Las Vegas by angry bail bondsmen.

While many in the general public believe bail bonds are recession proof, the recent economic downturn has created a very difficult business climate for the average bail agency in Las Vegas. It may seem counter intuitive, but bail bonding is acutely sensitive to the economic ebbs and flows of the economy. While crime typically doesn't drop off during recessions, the ability of bail bond clients to produce adequate collateral or maintain sufficient credit worthiness usually does.

Since bonds are in essence loans, based on the ability of clients to repay the full bail amount if the defendant doesn't appear in court as ordered, fewer credit worthy clients means less business for a bail bondsman. Quite simply a bad economy means more potential clients just aren't good "lending" risks for bail bondsmen and don't have the assets necessary to collateralize bonds. As the epicenter of the housing bubble, and biggest city in the state with the highest unemployment rate in the USA, Las Vegas is a particularly bad place for bail bondsmen right now.

The City of Las Vegas, like many other cities across the country, is facing tough economic times of its own. Like no recession before, the Great Recession has put tremendous pressure on city budgets nationwide through lower tax revenues and unsustainable liabilities. Consequently, Las Vegas is looking for creative ways to increase revenue of their own. They have implemented a program that tasks city marshals to clear warrants by contacting defendants in order to generate payments, or in some cases, partial payments to the court. Essentially, defendants are paying money to the court, with the assistance and insistence of a marshal to avoid going to jail. The goal from the city's perspective is to clear warrants and generate revenue.

Las Vegas bail bondsmen are crying foul. Their contention is that this new program is setting up law enforcement as de facto bail agents. They contend that when law enforcement accepts payment from a defendant and in return are allowing defendants to remain free, they are in fact offering a bail transaction. With revenue down sharply and bail agency lay offs up in Las Vegas, local bail bondsmen are pointing to the city's new program as a root cause.

The City of Las Vegas maintains that the program doesn't violate any laws, state bail laws or otherwise. The city also points out that marshals are not accepting payments directly. They are however sometimes assisting defendants with the phone calls to the court.

As was astutely noted in the Las Vegas Review Journal's article, applicable Nevada statutes define bail as "a deposit made with a court or other government agency to secure or continue the release of custody and to guarantee the appearance of the defendant in a criminal proceeding."

While the Las Vegas program is limited to traffic warrants, the impact is still very significant to an average Las Vegas bail bondsman's business. These smaller amounts are the bread and butter bonds to a bail agency, which in aggregate equate to a large percentage of the annual total attainable market.

Las Vegas bail bondsmen as individuals, and collectively, are filing complaints with city and state officials over the new program. The results of their efforts have yet to be determined, as the process is still early.

Once that process does conclude, Las Vegas bail bondsmen will finally be able to point to an illegal city program that has damaged their businesses or have to admit they are just feeling the unintended consequences of an innovative municipal revenue generation strategy. However, one thing is for sure. They may not make it long enough to find out the answer.