

denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

opinion

Editorial: Let city's voters reverse impound law

By The Denver Post

Posted: 06/26/2011 01:00:00 AM MDT

A voter-approved initiative in Denver that was intended to impound cars driven by unlicensed drivers has caused more trouble than it's worth, of that we have no doubt. It should be repealed.

But voters, not the City Council, should decide whether to reverse course on the measure, which passed less than three years ago.

We hope Councilman Paul Lopez, who is advocating that council members repeal the initiative, will choose instead to go to the ballot.

Denver voters are a smart and reasonable lot. If Lopez and others were to make a forthright, fact-based case, we would not be surprised to see a repeal succeed.

But if council members were to circumvent voters, there is the very real danger their action would be perceived as arrogant and disrespectful.

In 2008, 54 percent of Denver voters approved Initiative 100, which was designed to force Denver police to impound cars driven by those without licenses.

Critics, including this editorial page, contended it was a clumsy effort to target illegal immigrants,

who are not allowed to have driver's licenses.

Be that as it may, the measure was flawed in fundamental ways. First, to the chagrin of its authors, it actually did not require police to tow unlicensed drivers.

Denver's city attorneys looked carefully at the measure and concluded that police could continue to exert discretion when deciding which vehicles ought to be towed.

When I-100's backers realized this, they attempted to convince voters to tighten the language to require towing, but that initiative was defeated.

Even so, the ordinance is far from harmless. More than 4,000 owners of impounded cars have been forced to post a \$2,500 bond and other fees to retrieve their cars. They get that money back after a year if no unlicensed drivers are caught driving the car.

However, that's a lot of money for most people. As a result, an offshoot of the bail bonds industry popped up to help people get their cars out of hock. Trouble is, the city doesn't have the right ordinances to police this new practice or force bondsmen to pay up if a bond forfeit is in order.



EARN YOUR
MASTER'S IN
INSTRUCTIONAL
DESIGN &
PERFORMANCE
TECHNOLOGY
100% ONLINE

FRANKLIN
UNIVERSITY
where success matters

LEARN MORE >>

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

So the measure has created additional bureaucracy and burdened those who have to pay bondsmen a non-refundable \$350 or \$400 to get their cars out of impound.

But has the ordinance cut down on those who drive without a license? No one knows, because no one has done a detailed study to find out. We suspect the ordinance has not made an appreciable dent in what is a statewide problem, but would like to see a serious analysis. One way to do that would be to compare the number of citations from year to year for unlicensed driving, taking population fluctuations into account.

If this sort of information were wisely packaged with an estimate of what it costs the city to enforce the measure, voters might be persuaded to cast it aside.

We hope Lopez and others would be willing to pursue this line of inquiry in an effort to persuade voters to roll back I-100 instead of ramming the decision down the public's throat.



You wouldn't trust Amelia
with your family pet.

Why leave the success
of your business to chance?

 network solutions

[Get Started](#)

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™