

Legal SCENE

By Ron Hocevar
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Ensuring domestic tranquility

Maintaining social peace is likely the primary purpose of government. The U.S. Constitution's preamble specifically refers to this function when it states its intent to "ensure domestic tranquility." That is why we have laws -- and law enforcement officers to enforce those laws--so we can *all* strive toward domestic tranquility. Many of the sentiments contained in this article are taken from an article I wrote back in early 2016. I am saddened and disturbed that I feel called to address these issues again today.

Since the tragic and needless death of George Floyd, we are buried by claims in the media that law enforcement is composed of racist, incompetent, trigger-happy individuals and should thus be disbanded, defunded, or obliterated. It's a shame that many of our government and civilian leaders throughout the country rarely stand up to defend our law enforcement community. The vast majority of the law enforcement profession are nondiscriminatory, honorable officers who want to serve their communities and make sure we--*all* of us--are kept safe. Yet just as there are bad lawyers, doctors, priests, teachers, and any other vocation you can name, there are some bad law enforcement officers out there; there is no doubt or question that these bad officers should be ferreted out and taken off the line. But to paint all law enforcement officers with this broad brush only adds to the divisiveness we are witnessing throughout this country.

Law enforcement provides one of the core functions of government—to ensure the safety and security of all citizens. On an average day, an officer is far more likely to respond to situations which save lives—such as performing CPR, stopping a dangerous driver, or intervening in a domestic altercation—than situations where they may be called upon to unholster their weapon. Yet the responsibility of using their weapon is something that an officer must always be prepared to do because of the dangers of their job and their duty to protect the public. Police officers are called upon to make life and death decisions in mere seconds. One or two seconds of indecision to act by an officer could cost the life of not only the officer himself, but of another innocent person or persons. This is an immensely stressful decision no officer wants to face, but a responsibility all officers have accepted as necessary in their profession.

In 2018, there were 185 line-of-duty deaths in the United States; in 2019, there were 147, and so far this year, there have already been 116 deaths. In addition to the possibility of being killed in the line of duty, suicide is also unfortunately prevalent in the law enforcement community. In 2018, 174 officers committed suicide in the United States; in 2019, that number climbed to 228 officers. Fortunately, some officers have been able to use their experience in handling the stress of using deadly force to assist and better train other officers.

When a death is the result of the officer-involved shooting, the facts of the shooting are analyzed under Minnesota Statute Section 609.066, subdivision 2 to determine if the shooting was justified. This statute states:

- ...the use of deadly force by a peace officer in the line of duty is justified only when necessary;
- to protect the peace officer or another from apparent death or great bodily harm;
- to effect the arrest or capture, or prevent the escape, of a person whom the peace officer knows or has reasonable grounds to believe has committed or attempted to commit a felony involving the use or threatened use of deadly force; or
- to effect the arrest or capture, or prevent the escape, of a person whom the officer knows or has reasonable grounds to believe has committed or attempted to commit a felony if the officer reasonably believes that the person will cause death or great bodily harm if the person's apprehension is delayed.

Making the determination to charge an officer with homicide after an officer-involved shooting is typically made by the County Attorney's Office where the incident happened. Historically, a grand jury is impaneled to make the decision on whether or not to indict the officer. A more recent practice—which varies by county—has been for the County Attorney to make the charging decision, without the involvement of a grand jury. I have been involved in several investigations (for this County as well as others), and have yet to call a grand jury. The absence of grand jury involvement allows for a more transparent decision and, in my opinion, a more thorough analysis and confident decision being made by experienced criminal prosecutors.

In Scott County, we have an outstanding law enforcement community from top to bottom. Every shift, officers are willing to put their lives on the line to keep all of us safe. As I stated, of course the bad ones need to be weeded out and called to account. I don't know any officer who disagrees with that; as we have witnessed, one bad officer is unfortunately a reflection on all of them, and they don't want that. Keeping in mind the pressures and responsibilities placed upon them, and the great work the majority of them do every day, the next time you see a police officer, please introduce yourself and thank them for helping to keep us all safe.

Visit "Choose Not to Use" website to learn about addiction

Even though the annual Golf fundraiser is on hiatus this year, ChooseNotToUse isn't -- and they've recently updated their website to feature many more helpful resources related to addiction. Please visit <https://choosenottouse.org> for help and assistance.

Young people can develop budgets, spending strategies

For many young adults, autumn is a season of transition -- including those who are leaving their parents' homes to enter college or moving out to start work and live on their own. So how can a young person make good decisions with money during this time?



Ask the right questions.

Every spending decision involves questions, such as: What's the issue? What are the options? What are the pros and cons of each option? Which option will I choose? Would I choose that option in the future?

Ask your child questions like these to help understand spending. Listen to the answers, and then work with your child to develop a budget or spending plan.

Sample scenarios:

Let's look at some common spending scenarios for a college student. Each scenario describes the best way to keep income and expenses in balance.

Scenario 1

Let's say college student Melissa gets \$2,000 from a loan and her parents to cover five months of rent and food. Melissa shares rent and grocery expenses with three other students. A monthly spending plan to make the \$2,000 last five months means Melissa can't spend more than \$400 a month. Her spending plan for these two items would look like this:

- \$250 for rent.
- \$150 for food, or no more than \$37.50 a week.

Spending at these levels would ensure that the \$2,000 lasted five months.

Scenario 2

In this example, college student Tom earns \$480 (after taxes) a month from a part-time job. A scholarship and help from his parents cover tuition, rent, utilities, and food expenses. Tom's monthly spending plan for expenses other than these would look something like the following. Other than fixed costs, these numbers are averages and could vary from month to month.

- \$105 for car insurance (fixed).
- \$75 for cell phone plan (fixed).
- \$80 for gas, or \$20 a week.
- \$25 for personal care products.
- \$50 for shoes and clothing (average).
- \$120 for entertainment, or \$30 a week.
- \$25 to savings and emergency fund.

Sticking to this plan would ensure that Tom's \$480 monthly income cov-

ered these expenses.

In these scenarios, Tom and Melissa both used a budget (spending plan) as a tool to track of what they had and what they needed.

If you're an entering college student, this may be your first budget, so here are a few tips to help you on your way:

Track your spending.

You won't know what to put in your budget until you take some time to track what you spend. Keep track of *everything* you spend, even if it's something small, for a week or two.

List your income and expenses.

Calculate how much you earn every month. Include money earned from your job, work-study, financial aid disbursements, and parents. Categorize your expenses into categories like food, vehicle (payment, gas), school, entertainment (movies, games), personal (clothing, hygiene, makeup), phone, et cetera. Create a "miscellaneous" category to catch anything that does not fit the others.

Assess.

Are you spending more than you earn? If so, rethink your spending habits or find additional income. Look at your flexible spending (monthly costs that fluctuate) to see if you can find ways to save a few dollars (fast food, impulse buys).

Be wise.

Your budget evolves over time. Spend wisely, pay bills on time, stay on budget, and save money not spent. Organize your materials by filing paper bills and receipts, and know how to access financial information online quickly.

You can find worksheets at <https://local.extension.umn.edu/scott> (select "Financial Capability") to help you start a budget and for who is paying for what (parents, child, loans, and the like) for those going to college. For more information or questions, please contact Sam Royh, Scott County Financial Capability Educator, at sroth@umn.edu.

Sources: Shirley J. Anderson-Porisch, Extension educator emeritus in family resiliency

"Budget like a Boss" Carrie Johnson, PhD, AFC, Personal and Family Finance Specialist

Seeking financial security? Extension offers free course to help

"Where do you see yourself in five years?" If we were asked that question in 2015, virtually no one would have predicted our current situation. Now, we are familiar with terms such as "social distancing," "quarantining," and many other phrases; however, are we as familiar with financial terms and tools?

If you have felt stressed during the past few months due to reduced income or other factors, join University of Minnesota Educator and Accredited Financial Counselor, Sam Roth, for a two-part webinar to learn how to "flatten the curve" to financial security. The first

week will cover financial terms, budgeting, and tools to use. The second week will review the work participants did on their budgets, discuss credit, and cover the topic of debt management. This two-part webinar will be offered August 25 and September 1 from 10 - 11 a.m., and again September 15 and September 22 from 7 - 8 p.m. The webinar is free, however, we do ask that you register at <http://z.umn.edu/5nen>.

If you are interested in one-on-one financial counseling or have other financial questions, please email Sam Roth at sroth@umn.edu.