

## A Glimpse into Bandera County's Government

I have a friend, a man who has spent the bulk of his life working in law enforcement including local drug enforcement task forces, who once commented that among policemen involved with fighting drugs, Bandera was considered 'dirty'. I didn't think much about this because there wasn't any stories concerning the illicit drug trade in the local newspapers. The trafficking business of illegal drugs was something in the large metropolitan areas. Then a little 'sex party' in the county's sheriff's department started to change all that.

Bandera county sheriff James MacMillan tendered his resignation in April 2006 to accept another position in another county. The county commissioners replaced him with Weldon Tucker to be sheriff until the next election<sup>1</sup>. Then just a couple of months into his tenure, the sheriff's department surprised the county when news of a deputy's sex party was revealed, where Sheriff Tucker's deputy and dispatcher were caught naked in bed enjoying each others physical attributes<sup>2</sup> as other members of the sheriff's office were partying in the living room. Both the sex playmates were dismissed. For those of us on the outside looking in, it was a glimpse into the innards of our county government.

Then on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May, 2007 the first of a string of methamphetamine covert production operations was busted by the sheriff's office<sup>3</sup>. Reports in the newspaper continued with other methamphetamine labs being discovered and arrest being made, with the next on 8 September 2007<sup>4</sup>. Then a double bust on 28 October 2007<sup>5</sup>, followed by another one on 31 January 2008<sup>6</sup>. I was jumping for joy that our new Sheriff was cleaning house, not tolerating the manufacturing of one of the most vial and dangerous drugs known to our society, while also realizing my police friend knew what he was talking about. But there was more to come, after a pause the next meth lab bust came on 18 March 2009<sup>7</sup> followed soon by another on 17 May 2009<sup>8</sup>.

Apparently, there was strife and conflict of some sorts between the Sheriff and those of the Bandera county government<sup>9</sup>. This sheriff, who was out doing his job, who was busting all these meth labs that apparently had been operating with near impunity in Bandera county, now had the full force and resources of the county turned against him with the apparent purpose of ousting him from their little 'personal' domain. On hearing this, I immediately thought of my policeman friend's comment about drugs and Bandera, which really raised my suspicions. The sheriff, who had been so effective in doing what other sheriffs had apparently failed to do, was being prosecuted as a felon for unauthorized use of a county boat to check his trot lines<sup>10,11</sup>.

But even while facing this overwhelming power, Sheriff Tucker still managed to knock over one more meth lab on 1 February 2011<sup>12</sup>. But those who wanted Sheriff Tucker ousted prevailed and on 5 May 2011 he tendered his resignation<sup>13</sup>. But this isn't just about some power struggle in local governments, for these actions to prosecute are not FREE! It involved the tax monies of Bandera county citizens. This episode gives insight into the actions and attitudes of those who are elected to govern the county, and their attitude is that tax payers money is their's to JUST throw away in any way they please!

Bandera's taxes are some of the highest in Texas, new residents appalled when they see their first tax bill, and yet there is surprisingly little to show for all these years of money collected. And yet those who are charged with the governing of the county apparently didn't think twice about spending those tax dollars in pursuit of their own wants. Considering that in the ensuing years, the foiling of meth labs has returned to the 'pre Sheriff Tucker' era, leaves one pondering the 'dirty' claim of my police friend, and just what was the real motivation for ousting Sheriff Tucker?

Bandera is a microcosms of other troubled governmental systems in America including the Federal government. Being a wholly monolithic political system with just one participating political party (Republican), the government of Bandera has lost the systems of tensions that is necessary for a modern government to function effectively. Without the counterpoise of opposing parties to hold each other in check and therefore accountable to the people, governments decay into dysfunction, absorbing the peoples resources but doing little of value with those resources.

### **Checks and balances is a ‘must have’ requirement for an modern government to function.**

The point of this thesis is to exposes the managerial skills of the Bandera government, for this group holds responsibility for the rest of government departments. The sex party just after Tucker was made Sheriff, is a strong indicator of problems in that department. Then a string of methamphetamine lab bust would have positively alerted the government of a serious problem in Bandera county. But instead of addressing problems, the government chose to spend tax payers monies on deposing the one who was doing something about the drug problem. These glimpses into the core of those who govern Bandera, explains why citizens of Bandera pay such high taxes while receiving so little in return.

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