

Under the Influence with Otis & Arthur

What is a sheriff's card and can I arrest anyone?

Otis

Getting a job in Las Vegas is a lot of work, Arthur, not that you would know. Most jobs in Vegas require that you obtain a sheriff's card. The card is for fingerprints and checking up on your criminal background. This way Big Brother can watch you better. A sheriff's card in gaming is even more intense because an applicant will be disqualified if they have a felony on record.

Now, I realize the importance in some licensing, but the sheriff's card is ridiculous. Nowhere else in the country does this kind of blanket processing for employment exist. I could understand if it involved jobs where background checks are essential, like working in a bank or with children, but the practice encompasses most jobs in Nevada. The sheriff's card is basically a reaction to the gaming industries who demand accountability in their hiring practices. The casinos want to know who they are hiring. In other words, it's all about protecting the casino's money.

Banks around the nation handle the same amounts of money that the casinos do. The casinos in Nevada seem to think they are under some special jurisdiction to get what they want. Just look at the way the government and media in Nevada bend over backwards to make them look good. No one can deny the

importance of the casino industry in Nevada, especially me. But where is the line drawn? To the taxpayers that flip the bill for this blanket processing. It's unnecessary for the public to be held responsible; the casinos should handle this themselves, like the drug testing.

Another part of the sheriff's card is how you're supposed to have it on your person at all times, especially if you're a casino worker. Some casinos will do spot checks of employee's gaming cards, so they aren't penalized by the Gaming Control Board. I like the Gaming Control Board, they can out-muscle any of the casinos in town because they can revoke their license.

Even the health card and TAM card for alcohol serving have secondary purposes. They primarily serve to educate servers in health practices and alcohol responsibilities, so guys like Artie don't hurt themselves at a bar. No one can deny the importance of these directions. However, they also serve to protect the employers from legal suits by patrons through passing on most of the liability to the worker.

You know, Artie, some day you might move out of your parents house and find a real job in Vegas. Once you go downtown and experience the process of obtaining a gaming card for yourself, amongst all the filth that makes Fremont Street special, I'm sure you'll see my point on things.

Arthur

Otis, what's with this "Big Brother, Big Brother" syndrome you're stuck on this week? Have you been playing with model airplanes again? The fumes from that glue can make you paranoid. Careful, Otis.

Would it be trite for me to say that perhaps you protest too loudly? You are really on a jag about drug testing and fingerprinting all of a sudden. Is it possible that you are finally looking for a job? With your background, I might be paranoid as well.

So what if a potential employer wants to check your background? It makes sense for casinos to want to minimize the possibility of hiring a high-risk employee.

A lot of cash goes through the gambling houses in Nevada on a daily basis, and I understand the need to screen employees for drug abuse as well. If a hotel or other employer pays for your time, they have the right to know that you are able, on a day-to-day basis, to perform your job responsibly, with a clear head.

I do find some cause for concern with the current methods of drug testing, however. The way testing is currently conducted, the results pry into the after-hours lives of employees, since any drug use shows up.

I'm not advocating drug use here, just defending privacy. Though employers have a vested interest in making sure employees are "clean" during work hours, they do infringe on personal rights with testing methods as they exist.

And how valid are those methods when everyone knows how to thwart

the results?

Instead of pre-employment drug screening, employers should be limited to daily impairment testing. In other words, if a supervisor or other co-worker thinks someone on their shift is impaired, they could develop tests to see if the individual in question is impaired at the moment. Overall this system would be at least as fair as the methods in use already, and probably harder to fudge the results.

Better accuracy would make this method perhaps more fair than current testing methods and still achieve the desired effect for the employer, without infringing on an individual's privacy during off hours.

The same principle could be applied to fingerprinting and financial background checks.

As practiced today, the system assumes that any past blemish on someone's record indicates ineligibility for hire. That seems a little discriminatory. Just because an individual may have declared bankruptcy in the past doesn't mean they are looking for an opportunity to become a career criminal.

But Otis, I would recommend any employer screen you in every way possible, not because I have any particular knowledge about your background or personal habits, but simply because I know you.

Good luck in your job search! Feel free to list me as a reference.

—"Otis & Arthur" is co-authored by S.T. Sutherland and Vince Caliguire.

Is there a drug test?

The question of drug testing strikes terror in some students who are applying for a job in Las Vegas. If there is a drug test, the next question is

whether the test is for urine or hair samples. The savvy applicant realizes that a urine test goes back a month, but the hair test goes back three

months (good thing the "Dead" come in the beginning of the summer).

The fact is, college is about learning and new experiences.

Whether it's ethically correct or not, some people choose to take that route through drug experimentation.

To think that no drug situation exists at UNLV is naive; our school is no different from any other in the nation. Crime statistics show a drug comeback; nationally, the number of college students who have tried drugs stands at 50 percent. Marijuana and LSD are coming back faster than bell bottoms. Unfortunately that kind of lifestyle makes it difficult to get a job in Las Vegas.

Those of you who have taken a drug test for a job know what a traumatizing experience it can be. If you're lucky enough to be hired for the job, then you must go for your drug test that day. Once you get there the actual test requires that you give a detailed personal medical history. Then you wait a long time, until finally your moment of truth

Living at Large

VINCE CALIGUIRE

arrives. "You mean you wanted urine!?" An attendant follows you in for a urine test. Gentlemen generally make small talk to relieve what is known as stage fright. After you've finished, you gingerly hand the attendant your sample and sign some papers.

Drug testing was meant to be used for jobs that dealt with life and death situations. Now it has been perverted into what we have today: unsubstantiated drug testing to comply with a company policy. The rights of the employee have deteriorated into a Big Brother syndrome. I don't understand why the employer needs to know what you're doing in your off hours. Coming to work stoned is one thing, but if your lifestyle doesn't affect your job performance, it shouldn't matter.

More than that, it diminishes certain rights that every citizen should be entitled to. Some casinos even perform financial checks on potential employees. A bad financial record may prevent an applicant from getting hired. What does that have to do with anything associated with work?

The funny thing about these drug tests is that they accomplish nothing. The hotels still have a large number of employees that use drugs, either to keep up with the late hours or to unwind once work is done. The stressful environment of the industry correlates a higher drug and alcohol usage com-

pared to other industries.

There are too many ways to get around these tests that are common knowledge. Remedies like herbal tea can clear you for a urine test within twelve hours. The tricky hair test can also be side-stepped. Even if an applicant just abstained for a month, he or she could continue their habits after their test was completed. Spot checks for drug testing are a rare occurrence.

The laws of this country are constantly under scrutiny. Times may change or adjust the laws, as was the case with prohibition. Our government has the same problem with drugs as it did during prohibition: enforcing the law. Now we have a society where companies are taking the power vested in our government into their own hands, enforcing the laws that our government can't enforce themselves.

More and more companies are acting like micro-societies prescribing their own laws and jurisdictions. Just look at "Disney Nation" in Florida. Companies in Nevada get away with even more because Nevada is a "right to work" state.

It doesn't matter how you stand on the drug policies of this nation; drug testing isn't about that. It undermines fundamental freedoms that every citizen is entitled to. Besides, if it's drug testing now, what will be next?

—Vince Caliguire is an Opinion Writer at The Rebel Yell.

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