



**Organization:** Safe Streets Campaign in Tacoma, WA

**Contact:** Moni Hoy

**Q: What did you change a law, a regulation, an ordinance, a policy or other?**

**A:** A change was made in the Drug Paraphernalia Ordinance. The new ordinance, now one of the strictest in the State prohibits the use, manufacturing, distribution, display and sale of any drug paraphernalia within the city limits of Tacoma. The Tacoma City Council unanimously passed this ordinance on October 05, 2004.

**Q: Where did the idea to make the change originate?**

**A:** The idea to change the Drug Paraphernalia Ordinance originated from a Safe Streets neighborhood meeting about a year ago. Neighbors at an Eastside Tacoma neighborhood were upset that two local convenience stores/mini-marts were selling knives, swords, numb-chucks, tasers/stun guns, cross-bows, throwing stars and other martial arts weapons as well as pipes, scales, psuedophedrine, methamphetamine “cookbooks” and other drug paraphernalia.

Prior to our advocacy, Tacoma’s ordinance allowed the sale of drug paraphernalia and dangerous weapons to those over the age of 18. Neighbors were frustrated that the police and city officials weren’t able to do anything about these offensive and dangerous items being sold in their neighborhood. The newly organized Safe Streets group decided to tackle the problem from its roots: by seeking to change the law itself. With guidance from its Safe Streets representative, the group formed a committee (called Citizens for a Safer Tacoma) and put together an action work plan to convince City regulators to ban the sale of drug paraphernalia and dangerous weapons.

**Q: What elected or other government officials did you meet with to accomplish this change?**

**A:** Right after the neighborhood group decided that they wanted to pursue a change in the Drug Paraphernalia (and Dangerous Weapons) ordinance, the City Council representative for the area attended their next meeting. This Council Member later helped champion this initiative within the City Council.

Members of Citizens for a Safer Tacoma committee also testified during City Council meetings and maintained ongoing contacts with other Council Members.

**Q: What materials did you use to make your case that the change was necessary and would produce the desired results?**

**A:** Armed with the knowledge that drug paraphernalia (and dangerous weapons) were being sold in convenient stores throughout Tacoma's neighborhoods, and with the knowledge that there were jurisdictions in other parts of the country that had existing ordinances banning the sales of these items, Citizens for a Safer Tacoma made their case with written and verbal testimonies from members of their group, as well as from other Tacoma citizens and civic groups.

**Q: Through what system/process did you make your change?**

**A:** This change was made primarily through the City Council's Public Safety Committee, which (through the urging of Citizens for a Safe Tacoma) directed the City's legal department to review the previous ordinance and look at the legal ramifications of the ban on the sale of drug paraphernalia (and dangerous weapons). City's legal staff then made recommendations to the Public Safety Committee and drafted a proposed ordinance that the Committee approved and sent to the general City Council for adoption.

**Q: Who were your allies in making this change?**

**A:** Our allies were: various Safe Streets Block Groups, Neighborhood Councils, the Tacoma Police Dept. and the City Council/Public Safety Committee

**Q: Who opposed this change?**

**A:** This change was opposed by some small retailers (pawn shops, mini-marts, etc).

**Q: Did you testify in front of local boards or state governing bodies?**

**A:** Citizens for a Safer Tacoma testified in front of the City Council and its Public Safety Committee. The Safe Streets representative for the group also testified to the aforementioned governing bodies in support of their initiative.

**Q: Did you participate in media advocacy to make your change?**

**A:** There was some local newspaper coverage as well as some televised news on the initiative. This coverage, however, had little bearing on the Drug Paraphernalia Ordinance being passed.

**Q: Please describe in detail the outcome of your change.**

**A:** The City of Tacoma has one of the biggest methamphetamine problems in the country. Contributing to the problem is the vast availability of drug paraphernalia that is used to make and consume methamphetamine and other illegal drugs. Due to the efforts of Citizens for a Safer Tacoma, the availability of drug paraphernalia is now drastically reduced.