WE SIMPLY HAVE TO CHANGE OUR IMAGE

Closing Law Will Help Make Lafayette's Streets Safe

Charles Lenox

It is a shame that on every controversial issue the opposing sides become so polarized that there is no middle ground for a compromise.

The drinking driver problem is a prime example. As the numbers of persons killed or maimed by drinking drivers grew, the public became more and more aware of the problem and started seeking answers.

This increased pressure on public officials to come up with some answers and some of the answers simply were not well thought-out.

OPEN CONTAINER CONTROVERSIAL

The decision by the Lafayette City Council to pass the open container law was certainly well-intentioned, but there are certain aspects of the law which are not only hard to enforce but make little sense.

The fact that the law did not spell out what constituted a sealed container certainly leaves a loophole. We also do not agree with the section of the law which makes it illegal for a person riding in the vehicle to have an open container. We believe very strongly that the person driving should not be drinking, but can we see what good it does for passengers to be restricted.

This is a case where the intent was certainly good, but this is a law that is very difficult to enforce and we actually wonder just how much good it will do.

CLOSING LAW BEING DEBATED

Now we have another debate raging about the 2 a.m. closing law. We have some concerned that it will force drinkers to go out of town to drink, others that it will not work if it is done in the city and not in the parish, and on and on.

The problem we have is that for years Lafayette has been a party town. We have encouraged the image, telling people to come to Lafayette and have a good time even if it meant getting drunk and making our streets dangerous.

But Lafayette has grown, the number of persons coming to Lafayette to have a good time has doubled and tripled and our streets are not safe. It is no longer a problem that we can ignore.

WE MUST CHANGE THE IMAGE

The bottom line is that we need to change our image. We can continue to be a community where you can come and have a good time, but there has to be a limit. We can not leave the bars open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and have our streets safe.

It means that we have to close the bars at 2 a.m. to reduce the drinking drivers and the number of persons who commit crimes, that is what we will have to do.

We honestly do not believe that many bar owners are going to go out of business if they close at 2 a.m. if that is the case, they may be like the many people who jumped into the drilling business when the oil boom was taking place — they have to change their way of doing business or look for another line of work.

The intent of the closing law is not that the owners go out of business. It is to make Lafayette's streets safer and we honestly do not see how anyone can oppose that.