No one wears a demeanor of glee for getting a traffic ticket.
Let’s face it, that kind of stuff is quite upsetting, regardless of who you are. Often, police officers who dole out these tickets are called all sorts of names.

By IKE MGBATOGU

Contributing Writer

COLUMBUS – No one wears a demeanor of glee for getting a traffic ticket.

Let’s face it, that kind of stuff is quite upsetting, regardless of who you are. Often, police officers who dole out these tickets are called all sorts of names.

It pretty much comes with the job. And, officers are probably used to it.

But, what’s hard for an officer to swallow is being called names by a former Congressman who would become governor, said the Fraternal Order of Police Capital City Lodge No. 9 President Jim Gilbert.

“He’s been called a lot in his career but he’s upset because of the person calling him an idiot. He would like an apology, not for himself, but for all police officers,” said Gilbert.

Gilbert was talking about Officer Rob Barrett who ticketed John Kasich for failing to yield to an approaching emergency vehicle in an incident that played out on State Route 315, on January 8, 2008.

Apparently, Kasich stewed about being ticketed over the years and told the story of the incident while speaking to state workers at the Environmental Protection Agency. While trying to use the incident as an anecdote for how not to treat people, Kasich called the officer who gave him the ticket “an idiot.”

“Have you ever been stopped by a police man who’s an idiot,” Kasich asked his audience. “I had this idiot pull me over on State Route 315. Listen to this story.” And, he told the rest of the story.

But, it was that story that landed him in hot water with the community of police officers.

Gilbert expressed disappointment.

“I’m pretty upset,” he said. “It bothers me to hear a police officer categorized as an ‘idiot’ when he’s just enforcing the laws - a law enacted to try to protect police officers and construction workers. If he [Gov. Kasich] had an issue on it, he could have gone to court on it,” said Gilbert.

He said such a statement is quite unbecoming for a man of his stature.

"Anyone with a leadership position needs to watch what they say. I think he should have used a better choice of words. It's very offensive to me. It's just wrong."

The Columbus Police Division investigated the matter and concluded that "Officer Barrett conducted himself in a professional and courteous manner by treating Mr. Kasich with respect and dignity."

The division released a statement saying, "Officer Barrett's actions were consistent with the division's core values of professionalism, respect, integrity, discipline, and enthusiasm, and reflect positively on himself and the Division of Police."

Clobbered with a barrage of criticisms, Kasich apologized to Officer Barrett last week.

In happened at a meeting with the Barrett and Gilbert, held at Kasich's Riffe Tower Office, where the governor expressed regret for his choice of words, calling them inappropriate.

Gilbert was satisfied with the governor's apology.

"The governor looked at me and apologized and said that he holds law enforcement in high regard."

Mgbatogu is a freelance writer and editor of Onumba.com based in Columbus. He can be reached by email at Onumbamedia@yahoo.com