

TRAFFIC FINES & FEES

What are traffic fines and fees?

In 2014, Leah Jackson got a \$315 ticket for turning left at a red light. She could not pay the fine so her license was suspended. She had to use her car for work, so she drove on a suspended license. As a result, she spent more than \$13,000 over 4 ½ years on additional tickets, court costs and insurance.

These excessive traffic fines and fees are hurting everyday Minnesotans who just want to get to work, buy groceries and take care of their families.

What are the current laws?

Minnesota law allows excessive traffic fines and fees, and for a person's driver's license to be suspended if they fail to pay a fine for a traffic violation or fail to appear in court in response to a ticket.

What can we do?

Support HF 1060/SF 1375 and HF 1061/ SF 1736.

- HF 1060/SF 1735 requires courts to consider financial hardship before imposing traffic fines and fees, and authorizes reductions or waivers of fines and fees.
- HF 1061/SF 1736 prohibits the state from taking away people's driver's licenses for failure to pay.

What is a “wealth-based” justice system?

When people with otherwise identical records receive different punishments solely because of their ability to pay, it creates a “wealth-based” justice system.

Contact Julia Decker, Policy Director, at jdecker@aclu-mn.org or 952-240-6528 for more information about the ACLU-MN's work.

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Who is affected?

Driver's license suspensions and excessive fines and fees for traffic tickets disproportionately affect low-income people. With limited access to reliable public transportation, driving is often the only realistic means of transportation for most people in Minnesota. Many people are essentially forced to drive with a suspended license out of necessity, which can result in more fines or even jail time.

Stripping low-income people of their driver's licenses makes it more difficult for them to earn a living and to pay off their fines and fees. Once their license is suspended, they can no longer lawfully drive to and from work, school, job interviews, medical appointments, the grocery store or religious services.

Why are Minnesotans losing their licenses?

1 in 3 of all suspended driver's licenses are due to unpaid fines and fees.

44,604 Driver's licenses suspended per year for [failure to appear in court](#) on a petty misdemeanor traffic violation or driving after suspension.

38,472 Driver's licenses suspended per year upon conviction of a [driving after suspension or revocation violation](#).

7,056 Driver's licenses suspended per year for [failure to pay](#) a traffic or parking ticket.

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