

2021 Driver's License **SUSPENSION REFORM**

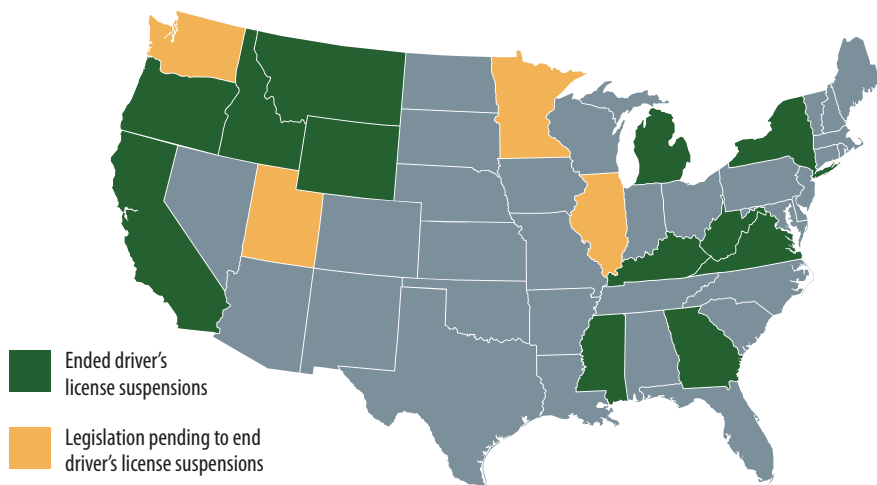
HOUSE FILE 336 (Becker-Finn) | SENATE FILE 432 (Ingebrigtsen)

Overview

The Driver's License Suspension Reform bill:

- Ends driver's license suspensions for failure to pay a traffic ticket
- Maintains the collections system for unpaid tickets and other court debt
- Eliminates the tacked-on suspension period after paying a fine for driving after suspension

Across the country, more than 11 million driver's licenses are suspended due to inability to pay court fines and fees. Since 86% of working adults drive to work, and many jobs require a valid license, license suspension can quickly lead to a financial crisis for those without significant savings. State policymakers are beginning to recognize that suspending driver's licenses for unpaid court debt is harmful for families, costly for taxpayers, and detrimental to public safety. As a result, since 2017, **12 states have ended driver's license suspensions** and **four states have driver's license reform legislation pending** for failure to pay traffic tickets.



Over 60%

of low-income workers whose driver's license is suspended lose their jobs, leaving them unable to earn the income necessary to pay their court debt or meet other basic expenses such as groceries and rent.

COST TO TAXPAYERS:

Each traffic stop for driving after suspension requires **nine hours of personnel time to process.**¹

In 2018, Minnesota recorded 38,472 convictions for driving after suspension or revocation. Nine hours of personnel time per violation *only on cases that resulted in conviction* equals **346,248 personnel hours, or over \$10,000,000 cost to taxpayers,** not including time spent by public defenders, judicial clerks, jailers, bailiffs, and administrators involved in processing license suspensions and reinstatements.

Driver's License Suspension is Costly for Taxpayers and Employers

Driver's license suspension creates a heavy cost burden on families, employers, law enforcement, and our court system and reduces our tax base. This is why suspensions should only be used for dangerous driving violations, not as a collections tool.

- Families: license suspension leads to job loss, escalating debt, and increased reliance on publicly funded safety-net programs.
- Employers: when employees can't get to work, employers take on the cost burden of hiring and training new employees.
- Law enforcement, prosecutors, public defenders and judges: the time burden of processing driving after suspension cases unrelated to dangerous driving diverts resources from addressing other more pressing public safety issues.

¹ According to an analysis from Union County, Ohio.

Holding Drivers Accountable

Minnesota has efficient and effective measures to hold people accountable for obeying traffic laws and paying traffic tickets. Driver's License Suspension Reform would end driver's license suspensions for unpaid traffic tickets but would not impact the following accountability measures:

COLLECTIONS:

Unpaid traffic tickets accrue late fees and are sent to collections, just like other non-traffic-related court debt. The Department of Revenue carries out collections for the state of Minnesota, using the following measures to collect unpaid debt:

- Revenue Recapture (withholding payment for debt from your tax refund)
- Garnishment of wages, bank accounts, or other income
- Filing a lien against property

These current practices would not change with Driver's Licenses Suspension Reform.

HABITUAL VIOLATOR LAW:

Under Minnesota's Habitual Violator law, a person who is convicted of four traffic violations in a year or five in two years has their driver's license suspended for 30 days. If they receive one additional traffic ticket within those time periods, their license is suspended for 90 days. This ensures that habitually careless or dangerous drivers are still subject to license suspension after Driver's License Suspension Reform measures pass, but ties suspension to driving behavior, not ability to pay.

DANGEROUS OR NEGLIGENT DRIVING:

Some driving violations, such as DUI, carry a mandatory driver's license suspension. Additionally, judges have discretion to direct the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to suspend a driver's license for any traffic violation they consider dangerous or negligent. DPS can also suspend a driver's license without direction from the court if a person is convicted of a traffic violation that contributed to an accident that caused personal injury or property damage. Driver's License Suspension Reform would not alter any of these remedies.

Key Endorsements

✓ Minnesota State Bar Association ✓ Minnesota County Attorneys Association ✓ Minnesota State Public Defenders

By the Numbers

Current Driver's License (DL) Suspensions in Minnesota:

81,363

Minnesota DLs are currently suspended for unpaid traffic tickets

17,236

Convictions for driving after suspension per year

If Minnesota passed Driver's License Suspension Reform:

112,000

fewer DL suspensions would be issued each year

24,000

people would become immediately eligible for DL reinstatement