

Introducing Nevada Bill AB 116: Decriminalizing Minor Traffic Violations and Ending Traffic Warrants

THE ISSUE

Nevada is one of only 13 U.S. states that prosecutes minor traffic violations as criminal offenses, rather than as civil infractions. Those who are unable to afford traffic fines for minor violations such as speeding or driving with a broken tail light can be arrested and even incarcerated.

ASSEMBLY BILL 116

Introduced with seven primary sponsors (including Senate Majority Leader Nicole Cannirzzaro) and 23 co-sponsors (including Assistant Minority Whip Lisa Krasner), [AB 116](#) will:

- Decriminalize minor traffic violations, making them civil infractions.
- End the practice of issuing warrants when a person cannot afford to pay fines, fees and assessments imposed.

WHY NEVADA NEEDS THIS REFORM

01

The majority of traffic warrants are not issued for dangerous driving. Unpaid traffic fines constituted 83.3% of open bench warrants for arrests issued by judges in Las Vegas Municipal Court between 2012-2020. The majority of open bench warrants (58.6%) are for administrative infractions including: failure to pay; driving without a license; driving with an invalid, suspended or canceled license or plates; or no insurance.

02

Most arrest warrants are issued to the people least able to afford traffic fines. In Clark County, 58.5% of open warrants were issued to people whose estimated household median income was \$49,000 a year or below.

03

Nevada has no grace period for payment plans. If a person is enrolled in a payment plan, and they miss a payment due date, they are automatically put back in warrant status and subject to additional warrant fees. Warrant fees must be paid before payments on the initial fine payments can resume.

03

Warrants are a counterproductive method of coercing debt payments. In Clark County, the average person arrested on a traffic warrant spends almost three days in jail at a cost to taxpayers of over \$400. Being behind bars often costs a person their job, making it impossible for them to earn the money they need to pay the debt.

04

When traffic warrants stop, collections increase. AB 116 builds on a successful model established by Carson City, which stopped issuing warrants in traffic cases in 2019. Carson City's collection rate increased by 8.5% following implementation.

05

Nevada's traffic warrants disproportionately punish communities of color. More than two-thirds of currently open bench warrants (68.9%) were issued to non-white individuals. In Clark County, Black people make up 44.7% of those who have open warrants, though they only represent 13.1% of the population.

06

Issuing traffic warrants wastes valuable public safety resources. The most common traffic violations that led to a bench warrant were not based on dangerous driving, but were on administrative violations. Law enforcement have less time to pursue projects that actually increase public safety when they are forced to find, arrest and incarcerate people who can't afford to pay a traffic ticket.

BIPARTISAN SUPPORT

Americans for Prosperity

Mi Familia Vota

Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada

ACLU of Nevada

Nevada Attorneys for Criminal Justice

Clark County Black Caucus

Forced Trajectory Project

Battle Born Progress

Return Strong: Families United for Justice for the Incarcerated

Mass Liberation Project

Washoe County Public Defender's Office

LEARN MORE

Contact Fines and Fees Justice Center Nevada Director, Leisa Moseley Imoseley@ffjc.us.

Visit <https://finesandfeesjusticecenter.org/campaigns/nevada>