

Introducing AB 151: an end to Nevada's debt-based driver's license suspensions laws

THE ISSUE

The vast majority of Nevada driver's license suspensions are for traffic tickets that residents cannot afford to pay. Between July 2017 and June 2019, over 38,000 Nevadans had their driver's licenses suspended just because they couldn't afford to pay court fines and fees.

This cruel practice forces people to make an impossible choice: stop driving and lose access to work & basic necessities — or keep driving, and risk more fines and fees, arrest and even incarceration. It's time to end this harmful policy and restore Nevadans freedom to drive.

ASSEMBLY BILL 151

Sponsored by Assemblywoman Cecelia González and Assemblywoman Selena Torres, [AB 151](#) will help thousands of safe drivers regain the freedom to drive by:

- Ending driver's license suspension when the underlying basis is unpaid minor traffic fines, fees, and assessments.
- Automatically reinstating licenses that were suspended for court debt from traffic violations.
- [Not eliminating](#) suspensions and revocations based on dangerous driving (DUI, accrued points, etc.) or relating to overdue child support.

WHY NEVADA NEEDS THIS REFORM

01 License suspensions should be used to get dangerous drivers off the road.

Yet, the vast majority of Nevada's license suspensions are for traffic tickets that residents can't afford to pay. Between 2017 and 2019, over 38,000 Nevadans had their licenses suspended because they couldn't afford to pay court fines and fees.

02 Debt-based suspensions make it impossible to work, take care of your family, and pay your debts. When people lose their license, over 40% also lose their job, and those who are able to find jobs take significant pay cuts.¹

03 Ending debt-based license suspensions could improve Nevada's economy and increase employment. In Phoenix, over 50% of people whose licenses were suspended lost their jobs, with a median decrease of \$36,800 to their annual income. Restoring just 7000 licenses increased GDP by \$149.6 mill.²

¹ <https://www.nj.gov/transportation/business/research/reports/FHWA-NJ-2007-020-V1.pdf>

² <https://finesandfeesjusticecenter.org/content/uploads/2018/11/Phoenix-license-restoration-pilot-THE-CITY-OF-PHOENIX-MUNICIPAL-COURT'S-COMPLIANCE-ASSISTANCE-PROGRAM.pdf>

04

Debt-based suspensions disproportionately impact communities of color. Black and Hispanic people are more likely to be the subject of traffic enforcement and have their licenses suspended, despite comparable traffic violation rates. In 2015, the Las Vegas Review-Journal investigated law enforcement data and found that residents living in the seven poorest, statistically African-American and Hispanic zip codes account for nearly two-thirds of traffic citations.

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AB 151 helps protect drivers from uninsured motorists and makes roads safer. Suspended licenses increase insurance premiums and prevent many drivers from getting insurance at all. This bill will help ensure all drivers can get and keep insurance, while bringing down costs and promoting road safety.

BIPARTISAN NATIONAL SUPPORT

In the last three years, **14 states have passed reforms** to curb license suspensions for unpaid fines and fees, missed hearing dates, or both:

Texas, Mississippi, Maine, Idaho, Montana, California, Maryland, Oregon, Virginia, West Virginia, Hawaii, New York, Michigan, Illinois and the District of Columbia.

The Driving for Opportunity Act:

Introduced by Senators Chris Coons (D-DE) and Roger Wicker (R-MS), this act provides grants to states that do not suspend, revoke, or refuse to renew a driver's license of a person or registration of a motor vehicle for failure to pay a civil or criminal fine or fee. The grants would cover the cost of reinstating a driver's license previously suspended for unpaid fines and fees. **It has bipartisan support from elected officials and over 50 key stakeholders:**

- U.S. Senators John Boozman (R-AR), Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Joni Ernst (R-IA)
- **Nevada Attorney General Aaron Ford and 23 other State Attorneys General**
- Vice President Kamala Harris was a co-sponsor the Driving for Opportunity Act.
- The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National District Attorneys Association, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, the National Urban League, Vision Zero, JPMorgan Chase and Instacart, and more.

President Joseph Biden's 2021 platform includes driver's license suspension and fines and fees reform.

LEARN MORE

Contact Fines and Fees Justice Center Nevada Director, Leisa Moseley lmoseley@ffjc.us.
Visit <https://finesandfeesjusticecenter.org/campaigns/nevada>