



If Your Driver's License Was Suspended for Failing to Pay Traffic Fines, You May Be Able to Get it Back Under a New Court Order

❖ Read this only if you live in the state of Washington.

The Department of Licensing (DOL) can no longer suspend driver's licenses because a driver failed to pay non-criminal traffic tickets and/or failed to appear at a related hearing. A court just declared this unconstitutional.

The court ordered DOL to reinstate these suspended licenses, meaning they will no longer be suspended. The court also prohibited DOL from automatically suspending a driver's license for unpaid traffic tickets until a new law goes into effect in January 2023.

❖ This court order relates only to suspensions for **non-criminal moving violations** like speeding. It does not cover suspensions for criminal traffic violations like Driving without a License in the Third Degree, Driving Under the Influence (DUI), reckless driving, or suspensions for habitual offenders.

What does this mean for me?

If your license was suspended because you failed to pay traffic tickets and/or didn't appear at a related hearing:

- Your driver's license is no longer be suspended, as of **June 16, 2021**.
- You will not have to pay the \$75 reissuance fee.
- DOL will reinstate your license if you are eligible for reinstatement.

What do I do next?

Register at DOL's License eXpress website to determine the status of your driver's license. It is free. <https://www.dol.wa.gov/licenseexpress.html>. Follow the step-by-step instructions.

You still have to pay general license and renewal fees. To learn about those fees, visit <https://www.dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/fees.html>.

Some drivers will need to take the driving test. To learn about testing requirements, costs, and locations, visit <https://www.dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/testing.html>.

Can I start driving now?

Maybe. Check to confirm that the suspension has been lifted by either:

- Calling DOL's automated line: (360) 902-3900; OR
- Checking the status of your license at <http://www.dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/checkstatus.html>

You can likely start driving again if all of these are true:

- Your license was suspended within the last 6 years for failure to pay for or appear at hearings for non-criminal traffic tickets
- Your driver's license has not expired within that time
- Your license is in your possession

❖ **Driving with a suspended license is illegal.** Don't risk getting fines and possible jail time. Drive only with a valid license.

Do I still owe the fines to the court or collection agency?

Yes. Those don't go away.

You can request a payment plan or, instead of paying, request to do community service towards that debt. Read [My Driver License Was Suspended. Can I Get It Back?](#)

❖ **CAUTION:** Your wages and/or bank account could be garnished, if you do not pay the fines or do community service.

My license is no longer suspended, and it is not expired. Do I need to do anything?

Your license is valid and you can drive with it. You still owe the traffic fines. Again, you can request a payment plan or community service, if you cannot afford to pay the fines in full

Read [My Driver License Was Suspended. Can I Get It Back?](#) for more information. Find it on WashingtonLawHelp.com

My license is no longer suspended, but it is expired now. What should I do?

If your license is expired, you must renew it. That may include taking the written and driving test. Visit <https://www.dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/testing.html> to learn about testing requirements, costs, and locations.

Carry another form of identification until you get your license back.

I followed the reinstatement instructions. My license is still suspended. What should I do?

Your license may still be suspended for several reasons. For example, if you are required to have financial responsibility insurance, called SR-22 insurance, for high-risk drivers, or if you failed to pay child support.

DOL can also suspend your license if you get too many traffic offenses in a short period of time (6 or more within one year or 7 or more within two years).

For information about SR-22 insurance, visit <https://www.dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/sr22.html>

To understand license suspensions for failure to pay child support, read [Child Support and License Suspension](#). You can also visit <https://www.dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/suspendchildsupport.html>

Carry another form of identification until you get your license back.

I have never had a driver's license but due to unpaid tickets, I have not been eligible to get a license. Can I get a license now?

If you have never been a licensed driver in Washington or any other state and you got a traffic ticket, DOL suspended your driving privileges. Check your status at the <https://www.dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/checkstatus.html>, because you may now be eligible to get your license.

If the website indicates you are now eligible, you can take the written and driving tests to get your license. To learn about testing requirements, costs, and locations, visit <https://www.dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/testing.html>.

Carry another form of identification until you get your license.

Get Legal Help

- **Apply online with CLEAR*Online** - nwjustice.org/get-legal-help
- **Outside King County:** Call the CLEAR Hotline at 1-888-201-1014 weekdays from 9:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.
- **In King County:** Call 2-1-1 for referral to a legal services provider weekdays from 8:00 am – 6:00 pm.
- **Persons 60 and Over** can call CLEAR*Sr at 1-888-387-7111 (statewide).
- **Deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired callers** can call CLEAR or 211 (or toll-free 1-877-211-9274) using a relay service of your choice.

CLEAR and 211 will provide free interpreters.

This publication provides general information concerning your rights and responsibilities. It is not intended as a substitute for specific legal advice.

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