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Traffic Tickets Are Big Business (/traffic-tickets-are-big-business/)

Posted on October 12th, 2007 in [Insurance Companies](#) ([tag/insurance-companies/](#)) [James Baxter](#) ([tag/james-baxter/](#)) [Speed Limits](#) ([tag/speed-limits/](#)) [Traffic Tickets](#) ([tag/traffic-tickets/](#)) | [Comments \(103\)](#)
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Traffic tickets (<http://www.motorists.org/fightticket/>) are a multi-billion industry. They have virtually nothing to do with highway safety, but they have everything to do with money.

When you begin to grasp the full magnitude of the public and private interests that depend on ripping off motorists through traffic tickets, you begin to understand why this unethical system continues to expand every year.

No one knows how many [traffic tickets \(http://www.motorists.org/fightticket/\)](http://www.motorists.org/fightticket/) are actually issued. Many local units of government deliberately hide this information so they don't have to split their traffic ticket revenue with the state. Not including parking tickets, we can estimate that somewhere between 25 and 50 million traffic tickets are issued each year. Assuming an average ticket cost of \$150.00, the total up front profit from tickets ranges from 3.75 to 7.5 billion dollars.

If just half of these tickets result in insurance surcharges (typically at least \$300 over a period of three years), you can add another 3.75 to 7.5 billion dollars in profit for insurance companies. This is why insurance companies "care" so much traffic "safety" programs and are willing to donate millions of dollars worth of radar and laser guns to the police. For them, it's simple: more tickets equal more money!

Realistically, there is no connection between receiving an occasional traffic ticket and the likelihood of being in an accident. So, there is no justification for charging a person more for auto insurance because they were convicted for a random traffic violation. The purpose of insurance is to cover unusual risk. The act of exceeding an unreasonably low limit is hardly an "unusual risk." That means [speeding ticket \(http://www.motorists.org/fightticket/\)](http://www.motorists.org/fightticket/) surcharges are pure profit for the insurance industry.

In total, we're talking about 7.5 to 15 billion dollars annually from tickets for government agencies and insurance companies. That's more money than several states take in from all taxes! Worse still, that total doesn't even include the money that "traffic schools," [attorneys \(http://attorney.motorists.org/\)](http://attorney.motorists.org/), radar-detector manufacturers, and scanner producers make.

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To keep the money coming in those that benefit from traffic ticket revenue have to do several things:

1. Pass enough laws so that anybody can be stopped at anytime and be given a ticket for a traffic violation. Trivial or concocted [traffic law violations \(http://www.motorists.org/fightticket/\)](http://www.motorists.org/fightticket/) are also frequently used as an excuse to stop, detain, and search persons for whom the police have no other legitimate reason to do so.
2. Blow out of proportion the effects of various traffic violations. They constantly talk about "carnage" on our roads, despite the fact that we have the lowest level of traffic fatalities in history.
3. Maintain a public relations campaign that claims traffic tickets are only given to bad drivers, and that these drivers should pay for the cost of enforcement. This is how you make it appear logical that the police and courts are funded through traffic ticket receipts.
4. Keep the ticket prices below the pain threshold that would compel motorists to aggressively contest traffic citations in court. They know that if fines got too high, motorist would fight heir tickets, and trials eat up all the profit.
5. Remove as many due process protections for traffic law offenders as is politically possible. This not only further discourages people from contesting their tickets, but it also ensures that those that do will have a much more difficult time defending themselves.

The police enforce laws that result in direct benefits to police agencies and personnel. Judges hear cases in which a "guilty" verdict would have tangible financially rewards for the court and courthouse personnel. No other class of "crime" is as profitable for state and local governments as is that of traffic tickets. Traffic courts cannot be fair and unbiased when their financial welfare depends on traffic fines. Additionally, local government encourage traffic enforcement practices that rip off travelers to support local government services and to reward government employees. Yet these hypocrisies go largely unnoticed.

A few simple changes can radically alter this unjust system:

1. No court or police department should directly benefit from the collection of traffic fines.
2. No police department should be permitted to rate its officers based on how many tickets they write.
3. No local government should retain traffic fines. The money collected in local courts should be transferred to the state and returned via a local aid formula based on population.

Until these changes are made, you should forget the general notion that traffic tickets are fair and traffic courts are just. The entire system focuses on maximizing income. That's why most of the people who seriously [contest a traffic ticket \(http://www.motorists.org/fightticket/\)](http://www.motorists.org/fightticket/) either win or are offered an good plea bargain. They don't want anyone "making waves", that would cost them money. That's yet another good reason why you should [fight your traffic ticket \(http://www.motorists.org/fightticket/\)](http://www.motorists.org/fightticket/)!

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[...] Originally Posted by AZSI all i can say is that a police officer already knows if your getting a ticket before he even gets to your car. all that crap about cops have to write a certain amount of tickets is bs.... Really? Arkansas: Forrest City Ticket Quota Brings in 443 Percent Increase Utah: Cop Suspended After Protesting Ticket Quota Expect More Speeding Tickets in Weak Economy WUSA9.com | Washington, DC | Recession Could Result In More Speeding Tickets Traffic Tickets Are Big Business [...]

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[fargokantrowitz \(http://intensedebate.com/profiles/fargokantrowitz\)](#) 1p · [60 weeks ago \(#IDComment95439982\)](#)

Amen! It is disgusting what we have allowed ourselves to do to ourselves in the name of the ruse "law and order." The fact that a court or police department makes a single dime off of traffic tickets is simply disgusting. Why do we allow this to go on? Why isn't it an issue? If we took fines and gave the money to the schools or for health care assistance our society would be a much better place. I'm tired of having the police take EVERYTHING I own (I am very poor) whenever I make a mistake on the road. I have driven 30 years without an accident. Now I have to go to traffic school and wear a dunce cap because I didn't realize something about the road. Enjoy your steaks, fellas. Enjoy your goddamned steaks...

Reply

+3 [Vote up \(javascript: voteComment\(54223347, 1\)\)](#) [Vote down \(javascript: voteComment\(54223347, 0\)\)](#)



Mark · [98 weeks ago \(#IDComment54223347\)](#)

If you know someone, work for, or are related to someone in the police department, you probably wont get a ticket and are told to "be careful nexttime". This is a form of corruption! If everyone threw 3 bags of garbage on the roadway for every bullshit ticket they got.....I suspect this madness would end real quick.

I didnt serve in the military, see my friends get killed and almost get killed myself so I could come back and live in a penal colony!

Its time to wage war on these corrupt, so called protectors and servers!

If you agree, contact me at jim.vanderwoude@yahoo.com

Reply

+2 [Vote up \(javascript: voteComment\(13988705, 1\)\)](#) [Vote down \(javascript: voteComment\(13988705, 0\)\)](#)



Fritz · [210 weeks ago \(#IDComment13988705\)](#)

Saying that Traffic Tickets Are Big Business is an understatement. It may have started out as a safety effort but it's morphed itself into a business years ago.

Some of us who have been studying this problem for years know remedies to the problem. But, there's just one BIG problem: get enough drivers motivated to get involved to support and push legislation through the legislative process.

I can tell you from experience that's a hellava lot harder than anything you can imagine. I tried twice in Oklahoma to get NMA members organized into a state chapter. It's literally impossible. And as you know NMA members are supposedly people already of that mindset since the NMA is kinda a self lobbying group. Try and get drivers from the general public involved!!

The problem has a multitude of causes. Many have forgotten their civics lessons from school (if they still teach that). You have to know the gears of government . You can go on blogs, forums, and places like the Speed trap Registry and ask posters a simple question. If you feel so passionate about a subject as speed traps why don't you communicate that to your legislators. Or if I hear someone at work complaining. Once I suggest writing or calling their legislator, it's like I suddenly have the plague. And they come up with zillion excuses.

None of this happened overnight and it's a ongoing problem for us drivers. Our opponents appeared before state legislatures time after time to generate and support laws in their favor. Every cop belongs to some organization and every municipality does too. In fact many times they have common objectives. Their efforts have proved potent. Members of the driving public have NOT learned this lesson. There's nothing wrong with debating these subjects but the bottom line is that if that's all we do, the cops and municipalities will continue treating drivers like sheep. I'm sorry but I just don't see drivers ever getting their act together. The municipalities and cops realize that and will continue tightening the noose around our necks and fleecing us. I guess we have to remain optimistic but I really don't know how bad it will get or if there will ever be an end in sight. No matter how much drivers get abused it seems as the pain is never adequate enough to motivate them into action. This is a subject that a book can be written on.

Reply

+2 [Vote up \(javascript: voteComment\(13985434, 1\)\)](#) [Vote down \(javascript: voteComment\(13985434, 0\)\)](#)



antonio · [180 weeks ago \(#IDComment13985434\)](#)

"The Seatbelt Law is a Giant Money Machine for TOWNSHIPS. Ask Lawmakers why are 40 Million Kids are allowed to ride a School Bus twice a day without seatbelts?"

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+2 [Vote up \(javascript: voteComment\(13983039, 1\)\)](#) [Vote down \(javascript: voteComment\(13983039, 0\)\)](#)



Irina · [159 weeks ago \(#IDComment13983039\)](#)

ok, James calm down

Perhaps you have nothing better to say than insulting other people involved in a healthy discussion. It is normal to have a healthy discussion and different opinions.

I, in fact, had only 1 ticket in 9 years of my driving experience and that was not even my fault.

Reply

+1 [Vote up \(javascript: voteComment\(198586431, 1\)\)](#) [Vote down \(javascript: voteComment\(198586431, 0\)\)](#)
(<http://intensedebate.com/people/futurevip>)



[futurevip \(http://intensedebate.com/people/futurevip\)](http://intensedebate.com/people/futurevip) Op · 4 weeks ago (#IDComment198586431)

I received an old parking ticket, and I have decided to appeal this. I could not believe that they could do this without any prior notification to me. Please check out my blog: <http://outoftheblueparkingticket.blogspot.com/> (<http://outoftheblueparkingticket.blogspot.com/>)

Reply

+1 [Vote up \(javascript: voteComment\(54222121, 1\)\)](#) [Vote down \(javascript: voteComment\(54222121, 0\)\)](#)



Sue Wilson · 111 weeks ago (#IDComment54222121)

I live in NJ, and what a scam they've got going there. I've driven 30 years without so much as a single violation or an accident. Now that the state is hurting for money, they've started traffic traps and will get you on trivial things.

I got nailed in June for "failure to come to a complete stop at a stop sign"... even though I did stop. While they were writing my ticket, I watched them pull over EVERY SINGLE PERSON BEHIND ME! EVERY SINGLE PERSON GOT A TICKET whether they stopped at the stop sign or not.

I went to court to plead not guilty but was told I pretty much had no chance of winning so a prosecutor gave me a deal to take off the points on my license. I paid \$500 bucks. The judge said to me with a wink, "Thanks for helping to balance the NJ budget!" He knew it was a total scam.

What I didn't know is that the points stay on your INSURANCE record.. and my insurance went up \$300 a year for three years! I don't know what I'm going to do now that I got nailed again. It's total extortion. Somebody in the media ought to investigate and do a story.

Reply

+1 [Vote up \(javascript: voteComment\(54221395, 1\)\)](#) [Vote down \(javascript: voteComment\(54221395, 0\)\)](#)



JD · 119 weeks ago (#IDComment54221395)

States, counties, and municipalities are getting very desperate for cash due to the recession, and I have noticed speed traps have gotten a lot more aggressive over the past year. Law enforcement is coming up with some really sneaky ways to generate as many tickets as possible. I thought I'd seen it all until the other day when I saw an Audi convertible pulled over by an unmarked HONDA ODYSSEY MINIVAN! I'm sure this department writes tickets like gangbusters...I mean who expects a traffic cop to be running radar in an unmarked minivan.

Reply

+1 [Vote up \(javascript: voteComment\(13988709, 1\)\)](#) [Vote down \(javascript: voteComment\(13988709, 0\)\)](#)



Stephen · 210 weeks ago (#IDComment13988709)

Quite right. Police and the local govt. should never get funds from traffic fines it creates a bad conflict of interest.

Reply

[2 replies \(javascript: collapseThread\(13988709\)\)](#): active less than 1 minute ago

+1 [Vote up \(javascript: voteComment\(13988707, 1\)\)](#) [Vote down \(javascript: voteComment\(13988707, 0\)\)](#)



Douglas Guerra · 210 weeks ago (#IDComment13988707)

Unfortunately, the system in the US is completely out of control. Combine money to be made with an apathetic driving public and the result is driving conditions comparable to living in Iran.

After years of putting up with this corruption and stupidity, I moved to Germany where a drivers guilt must be proven (no picture or video = no ticket) and there are Constitutional privacy protections so insurance companies do not have access to drivers' records. Couple these with Police and Judges being subject to the same traffic laws they enforce and strong motorists' groups and drivers who would never accept anything else and the result is a truly just driving environment.

Reply

+1 [Vote up \(javascript: voteComment\(13988641, 1\)\)](#) [Vote down \(javascript: voteComment\(13988641, 0\)\)](#)



Don C · 209 weeks ago (#IDComment13988641)

Would love to do more. Just found out about this site by doing a search after receiving a speeding ticket in a trap. If the public can be made more aware, I think they would get more involved. I'd like to find out more about who receives the money and if officers have to write a quota of tickets....think that should be illegal.

Ticket I just received was \$155 (\$120 court costs & \$35 fine - weird).

Reply

+1 [Vote up \(javascript: voteComment\(13988185, 1\)\)](#) [Vote down \(javascript: voteComment\(13988185, 0\)\)](#)
(<http://www.motorists.org>)



James Young (<http://www.motorists.org>) 205 weeks ago (#IDComment13988185)

Officer Josh writes:

"If you do close to the limit the (average police) will not give you a ticket, usually within 10-15 pending on the area (hwy or city streets)"

How are we supposed to know that the officers near us are "average" and not some hot pencil bent on collecting money for his own personal reasons?

"And in most states it is illegal to require police to have quotas. There are power hungry cops out there I know this but most are pretty level headed atleast in my department. So the

moral of the story is "if you dont violate a law you dont get in trouble."

Quotas frequently exist whether they're called quotas or "performance review" or "productivity measure" or "public contacts" or something else. However, quotas are not the problem. The real issues are the expansive laws used to excuse unwanted and unnecessary intrusion into private matters and the "conviction at all costs" mentality where arrest is conflated with conviction. That is why we have so many innocent men in prison -- over 200 convictions for capital crimes exonerated by The Innocence Project at last count. Actual innocence is no guarantee against harassment, arrest or even conviction.

"I mean man give us a break our job is a pain in the butt already."

Then I would seriously consider a different profession. As far as breaks go, you made your own bed. . .

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- [Re: Ticket for flashing lights to warn other drivers \(http://forums.motorists.org/read.php?2,67,1278#msg-1278\)](http://forums.motorists.org/read.php?2,67,1278#msg-1278)
- [Re: Ticket for flashing lights to warn other drivers \(http://forums.motorists.org/read.php?2,67,1277#msg-1277\)](http://forums.motorists.org/read.php?2,67,1277#msg-1277)

• [Re: NCDMV DWI RESTORATION HEARING QUESTION \(http://forums.motorists.org/read.php?2,1268,1276#msg-1276\)](http://forums.motorists.org/read.php?2,1268,1276#msg-1276)

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