

# Free to Drive: National Campaign to End Debt-Based License Restrictions

<https://finesandfeesjusticecenter.org/campaigns/national-drivers-license-suspension-campaign-free-to-drive/>

Free to Drive is a nationwide effort to end debt-based license restrictions

More than half of U.S. states still suspend, revoke or refuse to renew driver's licenses for unpaid traffic, toll, misdemeanor and felony fines and fees. The result: millions of people are struggling to survive with debt-related driving restrictions just because they could not afford a court fine or fee — or because they missed a court hearing.

In 2019, over 100 ideologically diverse organizations launched [Free to Drive](#): a coalition united by the belief that restrictions on driving privileges should be reserved for dangerous driving, not to coerce debt payment or to punish people who miss a court appearance. In the last five years, 22 states and D.C. have passed reforms to curb debt-based driving restrictions.

Which states have enacted reforms in 2021?

This year alone, the governors of 10 states — Arkansas, Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, Utah, and Washington — signed legislative reforms. But there is still more work to be done. In our latest recap of 2021 reforms, we give advocates 10 key questions for evaluating ongoing and future efforts.

[Read our 2021 recap and key questions for evaluating ongoing and future efforts>](#)

Explore the Free to Drive campaign's [interactive maps](#) to see which states still suspend for failure to pay fines and fees and for failure to appear for a court hearing. You can also see which states have passed reforms and those with proposed legislation.



Get the facts about debt-based restrictions on driving

**Driver's license suspensions cost people their livelihoods.** 86% of Americans drive to work and many jobs require a driver's license. Without a license, you can't take your children to school, buy groceries, or get healthcare. Many people have no choice but to continue driving — meaning they risk more fines and fees, a criminal conviction, and incarceration.

**Suspending licenses cuts economic growth.** People who can't work or who lose income due to a suspended license have less money to contribute to the economy and less money to pay off their initial fines and fees — leaving them saddled with court debt for years.

**License suspensions undermine public safety.** When law enforcement uses valuable time to cite, stop, fine and arrest people for driving on a suspended license due to unpaid fines and fees, they have less time to investigate and focus on crimes that endanger people's lives.

## Failure to Pay Laws

<https://www.freetodrive.org/maps/#page-content>

### Green States

**Montana** - As of 2019 legislation, the state no longer suspends, revokes, or does not allow renewal of a driver's license for failure to pay fines and fees. Suspension for failure to pay is not applicable.

**Idaho** - The state does not suspend, revoke, nor not allow driver's license renewal for failure to pay fines and fees. Suspension for failure to pay is not applicable.

**Oregon** - Effective October 1, 2020, the state does not suspend, revoke, nor not allow driver's license renewal for failure to pay fines and fees. Suspension for failure to pay is not applicable.

**California** - As of 2017 legislation, the state no longer suspends, revokes, or does not allow renewal of a driver's license for failure to pay fines and fees. Suspension for failure to pay is not applicable.

**Nevada** - The state does not suspend, revoke, and/or not allow driver's license renewal for failure to pay fines and fees. Suspension for failure to pay is Not applicable.

**Utah** - The state does not suspend, revoke, nor not allow driver's license renewal for failure to pay fines and fees. Suspension for failure to pay is not applicable.

**Colorado** - The state does not suspend, revoke, and/or not allow driver's license renewal for failure to pay fines and fees. Suspension for failure to pay is not applicable

**Wyoming** - The state does not suspend, revoke, nor not allow driver's license renewal for failure to pay fines and fees. Suspension for failure to pay is not applicable.

**Minnesota** - Ends DLS for failure to appear in court on a petty misdemeanor parking or traffic violation or a driving after suspension ticket; Ends DLS for a conviction for driving after suspension or revocation; Ends the practice of "stacking" driver's license reinstatement fees for all except DUI-related suspensions and revocations. Suspension for failure to pay is not applicable.

**Michigan** - Michigan stopped suspending driver's licenses for failure to pay in all cases unrelated to the underlying offense being public safety-related. Licenses previously suspended for FTP and FTA will be reinstated without reinstatement fees. Michigan will no longer suspend a license for drug convictions and opted out of the federal requirements to do so. Suspension for failure to pay is not applicable.

**Illinois** - The state does not suspend, revoke, and/or not allow driver's license renewal for failure to pay fines and fees. Suspension for failure to pay is not applicable. .

**Mississippi** - The state does not suspend, revoke, nor not allow driver's license renewal for failure to pay fines and fees. Suspension for failure to pay is not applicable.

**Georgia** - The state does not generally suspend licenses for failure to pay fines and fees. However, they do suspend licenses for failure to pay the \$200 "Super Speeder" ticket fee. Suspension for failure to pay is mandatory.

**Kentucky** - The state does not suspend, revoke, and/or not allow driver's license renewal for failure to pay fines and fees. Suspension for failure to pay is not applicable.

**West Virginia** - The state does not suspend, revoke, nor not allow driver's license renewal for failure to pay fines and fees. Suspension for failure to pay is not applicable.



**Virginia** - The state does not suspend, revoke, nor not allow driver's license renewal for failure to pay fines and fees. Suspension for failure to pay is not applicable.

**New York** - The state does not suspend, revoke, and/or not allow driver's license renewal for failure to pay fines and fees. Suspension for failure to pay is not applicable.

## **Yellow States**

**Washington** - In 2021, the state changed the law from a mandatory suspension for FTP. The court now can revoke, suspend or not renew the driver's license of a person who misses a payment of court ordered fines & fees. However, prior to suspension the court must first order a hearing on the non payment and the individual must fail to appear at the hearing. The law does not go into effect until January 2023. Until the effective date the state must suspend for FTP without a hearing. In June of 2021 an order was signed by the district court in Washington requiring the Department of Licensing (DOL) to stop suspending licenses for unpaid traffic tickets for non-criminal moving violations & reinstate previously suspended licenses. Suspension for failure to pay is (see above description).

**Arizona** - In 2021, AZ ended debt based driver's license suspensions, but actively suspends/holds registrations for unpaid fines and fees. Suspension for failure to pay is (see description above).

**Texas** - In 2019 Texas passed legislation to end driver's licenses suspensions for failure to pay fees administered under a state Driver Responsibility Program. However, Texas continues to not renew licenses under an "Omnibase" program. This program is administered on a local level within in the state, and each jurisdiction can elect into this program. Those that do can prevent the renewal of a driver's license for unpaid fines and fees. Nonrenewal for failure to pay is discretionary. Suspension for failure to pay is not applicable.

**Arkansas** - In 2021, the state changed the law to still allow a court to revoke, suspend or not renew the driver's license or registration of a person who does not make arrangements for the payment of court ordered fines. However, prior to suspension the court must first order a hearing on the nonpayment and the individual must fail to appear at the hearing. Suspension for failure to pay is (see above description).

**Indiana** - The state has partially reformed suspensions, revocations, and/or renewals for failure to pay fines and fees. See full bill text for more info Suspension for failure to pay is (see full description in bill text).

**Maryland** - The state does not suspend, revoke, nor not allow driver's license renewal for failure to pay fines and fees for unpaid traffic violations, but continues for unpaid criminal fines and fees. Suspension for failure to pay is discretionary.

**Vermont** - In 2016 the state stopped suspending licenses for failure to pay fines and fees. However, Vermont continues to suspend for failure to pay fines and fees related to traffic violations punishable by points on the license. The suspensions are limited 30 days. Suspension for failure to pay is mandatory.

**Maine** - As of 2017 legislation, Maine does not suspend, revoke, nor not allow renewal of a driver's license for failure to pay fines and fees for criminal cases. Maine continues to suspend driver's licenses for failure to pay traffic-related fines and fees. Suspension for failure to pay is mandatory.

