



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ILLINOIS CLEARS PARKING TICKET LICENSE SUSPENSIONS FROM 75,000 DRIVING RECORDS

The License To Work Act is a Major Step Forward

SPRINGFIELD-- Thousands of Illinoisans who lost driving privileges for non-driving violations like unpaid parking ticket debt join with community advocates to celebrate the License to Work Act, which becomes law on July 1, 2020. The act, which is the result of years of advocacy and bipartisan support, ends the draconian practice of suspending driver’s licenses for numerous issues such as the inability to pay fines and fees from parking and vehicle compliance tickets. Nearly 75,000 drivers will have suspensions cleared from their driving records thanks to the act.

“Thank you. The License to Work Act could not have come at a better time as COVID-19 is devastating our communities. Driving is a lifeline now more than ever!” said Rosazlia Grillier of Community Organizing and Family Issues, who lives in Chicago and knows personally what it is like to have her driver’s license suspended in Illinois.

This victory is one of several in the efforts of the Transit Table coalition, a group of community organizations and advocates that seeks to eliminate transportation barriers that keep people out of work and in poverty.

While celebrating this step forward, advocates noted there remain other government policies that continue to bar people from driving, which makes it difficult to find and keep jobs, access medical care and education, and to support families.

The Illinois Secretary of State reported it has removed 92,589 parking ticket suspensions from the records of 74,999 drivers. The bulk of these drivers, around 55,000, are Chicago residents. These numbers far surpass the department’s initial statewide estimate of [55,000](#) impacted drivers who now have partially or fully cleared driving records. One critical note: a person can

have multiple suspensions (for the same or a different reason) on their license at the same time. Individuals should call the Secretary of State at **217-782-3720** to verify full driving privileges.

“This is important legislation which makes it easier for thousands of people to get to and from work,” said Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White. “I am pleased to have supported the License to Work Act by removing parking ticket suspensions from driving records as they are unrelated to traffic safety.”

Elected officials pushing for the bill included State Senator Omar Aquino (D-Chicago), State Representative Carol Ammons (D-Champaign), State Representative Tom Demmer (R-Dixon), Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, and many others from various geographies and ideologies.

"We can't allow excessive driver's license suspensions to hold people back, especially as our communities face multiple crises including COVID-19, the economic impact of the pandemic, and ongoing structural racism," said Senator Aquino. "Huge ticket debts piled on communities of color are part of that structure, and we should all be proud that the License to Work Act clears one of the many financial hurdles regular working people face every day."

"Violence and racism aren't always fast and dramatic. Sometimes it looks like piling tickets and debts on our own neighbors, and then taking away their driver's license when they can't climb out of the hole. That's why I worked with my colleagues for years to pass the License to Work Act. Ending the practice of using driver's licenses to leverage payment out of the poor and vulnerable must and will end," said State Representative Carol Ammons.

Years of research and investigation, including the [United States Department of Justice report](#) on policing in Ferguson, have connected excessive ticketing and the imposition and collection of resulting fines and fees to wealth extraction from communities of color, abusive policing, and damage to communities' trust in police and local government. This bill is a critical step toward combating the high rate of bankruptcies caused by aggressive and [racially disproportionate municipal ticketing and systems for collecting fines and fees](#).

Impacted Drivers Should be Fully Informed How to Benefit From the License to Work Act

Drivers who have received notice of a cleared suspension, or who think they may benefit, should **call the automated Secretary of State verification line at 217-782-3720 before driving** to ensure there are no other suspensions on their driver's license.

The Transit Table would love to hear from drivers about the impact of the bill, and what other issues might still prevent their driver's license from being fully reinstated. After checking their license status at 217-782-3720, drivers can visit license2work.org/take-action and click Share Your Story to let the coalition know about any other issues.

The Secretary of State also reminds drivers: If they have lost their physical license but it is still valid, they can apply for a duplicate. A driver can apply for a duplicate online or they can wait to

visit a facility in person when our office reopens. If their license is expired, they'll need to visit a Secretary of State facility to renew. If a license has been expired for more than one year, the driver will need to take vision, written and road exams.

Before visiting driver services offices, the Secretary of State encourages individuals to pre-register [here](#).

The License to Work Act Unwinds One Small Part of a Broader Tapestry of Injustice

“Reinstating driver’s licenses for tens of thousands of people is a huge win, but we can’t celebrate yet. There are still so many traps set for low-income people. Local governments still create other obstacles through tickets, fines, and fees that particularly harm Black and Brown residents. Worse still, these same neighborhoods have been hit hardest by the Coronavirus health and economic crises,” said Eric Halvorson, advocate with Chicago Jobs Council and Transit Table coalition.

The Transit Table coalition and other advocates will continue working to clear more transportation and ticketing policies that keep people out of work and in poverty.

“Driver’s license suspension is still used as a debt collection tool for many tickets and court debts, as well as for parents who fall behind on child support payments in the State of Illinois. This creates the same impossible ‘catch-22’ where a lost license leads to unemployment and never ending debt,” said Manny Rodriguez, Executive Director of Revolution Workshop and a member of the Transit Table coalition. “Our coalition still has more ambitious goals, including reducing the disproportionate rates of ticketing in communities of color, reducing local government ticket debt backlogs, reducing the extremely high costs of ticket, fines, fees and late penalties, and reducing the damage from collections measures like booting, towing, state income tax return withholdings, and employment bans caused by “debt checks” in Chicago.”

The Transit Table is a coalition of Illinois social service providers, advocates, and other stakeholders working to eliminate transportation barriers that keep people out of work and in poverty. Among the Transit Table members are:

ACLU of Illinois
Americans for Prosperity– Illinois
Chicago Jobs Council
Chicago Urban League
Collaboration for Justice: Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice & Chicago Council of Lawyers
Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI) / POWER-PAC Illinois
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights
Revolution Workshop
Shriver Center on Poverty Law
Woodstock Institute

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