

Vote 'Yes' on SB 154 / HB 264 – Sen. Barfoot & Rep. Wadsworth's bills to end debt-based driver's license suspensions

1. **95% of the nearly 170,000 suspended driver's licenses in Alabama stem from unpaid traffic tickets, not dangerous driving.**
 - Nearly 170,000 Alabamians have their driver's license suspended not because they are habitually reckless or dangerous drivers, but because they have failed to pay a traffic ticket or failed to show up in court to discuss an unpaid traffic ticket.
 - This legislation would provide that an individual's driver's license may not be suspended for: (1) failure to pay a traffic fine or (2) failure to appear in court for a *post-adjudication* hearing regarding a traffic fine.
 - This legislation still would keep dangerous drivers off the road in numerous ways. (1) It would allow points to accrue to a driver's license for each traffic violation. When someone reaches 12 points, they would be considered a habitually reckless and dangerous driver and would have their license suspended. (2) It would allow a court to suspend a driver's license for failing to appear at an *initial* court hearing or missing *more than one* post-adjudication compliance hearing. (3) It would allow a court to suspend a license if the individual misses more than half of their payment plan's stipulated payments in a year.
 - This legislation *does not* apply to DUIs or people with commercial driver's licenses.

2. **When someone loses their license, they often also lose their ability to keep or obtain employment. That makes it virtually impossible to obtain the funds needed to pay for their ticket.**
 - The intent of this legislation is to ensure responsible drivers who have minor traffic infractions but can't afford to pay the ticket or the payment on time do not lose their license simply because of the lack of financial resources.
 - Gov. Kay Ivey aims to add 500,000 workers to the workforce by 2025, but that goal will be extremely difficult to meet when nearly 200,000 Alabamians have their licenses suspended for unpaid debt.
 - In 2023, 31% of underemployed and unemployed Alabamians cited lack of transportation as the main reason they weren't working up to their potential.

3. **Many people whose licenses are suspended for debt-based reasons such as unpaid tickets make desperate choices to clear their debt. Research shows that:**
 - 89% had to forgo basic needs like food, utilities or medicine.
 - 73% were forced to request charity that they wouldn't otherwise have needed.
 - 48% took out a high-interest payday loan to pay off their tickets.
 - 30% admitted to committing crimes like selling drugs or stealing to pay off their debt. So the practice of debt-based license suspensions actually *decreases* (rather than enhances) public safety.

4. **If the thousands of Alabama drivers who lost their licenses for debt-based reasons had kept their licenses, Alabama would have brought in an extra \$277.8 million in revenue over the last five years.**
 - If the 165,958 Alabama drivers who lost their licenses for failure to pay or failure to appear had kept their licenses – and their jobs – Alabama would have brought in an extra \$277.8 million in revenue from income and gas tax revenue over the last five years, according to research by a UAB economist.
 - In contrast, the total amount Alabama could bring in if it collected all the outstanding debt owed by these drivers is \$144.2 million total. So we're sacrificing \$277.8 million to try to collect \$144.2 million.

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