

# Wichita City Council votes to provide free legal help for residents with suspended driver's licenses

WICHITA, Kan. (KAKE) - A [KAKE News investigation](#) in 2019 revealed a huge problem in the state. There are around 200,000 suspended driver's licenses in Kansas, which come with thousands of dollars in fines, making it practically impossible to get them reinstated.

KAKE's investigation started in 2019 when our senior reporter, Pilar Pedraza, nearly had her own driver's license suspended for missing a simple ticket deadline she had no idea about.

And what she discovered is she's far from alone.

"Everybody knows somebody who got a parking ticket, got mad, crumpled it up, and, you know, batted it into the wind, right? Without any realization of the consequence," said former Kansas Legal Services Director Marilyn Harp.

Harp says this happens constantly – someone will get a simple violation they either ignore or forget about, and the next thing you know, your license gets suspended, and you're drowning in debt.

"One of the problems is that fines and fees, the fines they owe are just astronomical compared to their income," said Harp.

KAKE's investigation also discovered that around 50,000 of the state's suspensions are in Wichita.

In December, 2022, the city council decided to do something about it.

After unanimous approval, the city will pay Kansas Legal Services \$157,000 next year to provide free legal help to residents fighting to get their licenses back.

"We have hired an administrator for this program. They will be at city hall on a regular schedule, at least three days a week," said Harp.

Harp says the lawyers will do everything they can to help reduce the fees and get through the complicated court processes.

She says this is a big step in solving this epidemic, and that she even expects it to improve the city's dire workforce problem.

"I've met, in this work, some very, very industrious folks. A guy who, during the summer, drags his lawn more behind his bicycle over an amazingly large section of Wichita, because he doesn't have a driver's license," said Harp.

"And that's the kind of industrious person people would want to hire. And what's barring him from that kind of employment is [needing] some guidance in how to deal with getting a driver's license."

[\*\*Go here to read the story.\*\*](#)

Last updated on January 04, 2023.

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