



Francis G. Slay  
Mayor



# NEWS

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## **City of St. Louis Municipal Court Adopts New Rule** *Making it More Fair and Just for Violators to Settle Fines*

St. Louis -- At Mayor Francis Slay's direction, the St. Louis Municipal Court has adopted a new rule to take into account violators' ability to pay when deciding the appropriate punishment for minor traffic and municipal offenses.

The administrative order, entered today by the Honorable Gordon Schweitzer, Presiding Judge of the St. Louis City Municipal Court, gives judges the direction and ability to exercise discretion in determining the fine payment and payment schedule for a municipal violation based on the offender's ability to pay.

The St. Louis Municipal Court has a special needs dockets, payment plans, and alternatives to fines and incarceration, like community service, for people who cannot afford to pay. Judges will not impose the fine payment date for four weeks, allowing defendants to receive another paycheck before having to settle their debt with the court. Judges may also allow additional time for a defendant to make payments. Today's order formalizes a practice that most of City of St. Louis municipal judges follow most of the time.

"Police officers give out tickets for public safety, not to generate revenue," Mayor Francis Slay said. "There should be a consequence when people violate the law, but the point is to change behavior, not break the bank for poor and working class people. A \$100 fine for someone working a minimum wage job is a real burden. For them, the punishment far exceeds the severity of the crime."

This change comes during the most robust warrant forgiveness initiative in the region, in which the City of St. Louis automatically lifted more than 220,000 arrest warrants stemming from minor traffic violations. The 90-day grace period for traffic scofflaws to come into the court to schedule a new court date expires at the end of the year. To date, more than 3,800 people have taken advantage of the free program.