

Thursday, April 30, 2009

Detroit extends traffic ticket amnesty program

Doug Guthrie / The Detroit News

Detroit -- The popularity of a month-long traffic ticket amnesty program that has so far collected more than \$1 million in unpaid fines and fees caused the city's 36th District Court to extend through next month the opportunity to settle up for 50 percent off.

A line of more than 100 people that wrapped around the inside of the courthouse lobby on Thursday -- the scheduled final day of the program -- would have been longer but some left after being told by court staffers about the extension.

"This actually is half as much as we collected last time we did this in 2002, but these are economically difficult times and I'm sure some have been saving up all month to make the last day," said Court Administrator J. Otis Davis. This is a service to the residents to help them clear up their records, plus it makes a dent in the city's budget deficit."

Proceeds go to the city's general fund. A total of 8,500 cases had been resolved by Wednesday. The court has estimated more than 460,000 cases qualify for the reduced payment program.

The court also is adding payable misdemeanor tickets, like failing to show proof of insurance or a valid driver's license, to the items that can be resolved at the discounted rate through May 29. Parking tickets aren't part of the amnesty program.

"This will clear my record and allow me to get my driver's license restored," said Cydnee Couch, 28, of Detroit's west side while she waited in line Thursday.

Couch admitted to having "multiple" speeding tickets from her youth.

"Let's just say I expect to pay \$1,000, even at 50 percent off," Couch said with a laugh. "I'm thrilled this can happen now and I can start to work on getting my license back. It's worth waiting in this line."

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