



# THE PLAIN DEALER

## Poor are hurt most by driver's license suspensions

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Cleveland

The process of suspending licenses hurts the North east Ohio economy and disproportionately affects the poor. John Coyne noted in his Aug. 21 article that 30 percent of the 60,000 drivers convicted of driving under suspension in 2004 were from Northeast Ohio. Cleveland-area auto insurance rates are routinely the highest in the state, and Cleveland is the poorest city in America: "30 percent" is not a surprising statistic, given that many of the convictions are related to driving without insurance.

At the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, we have evidence that indicates that many convicted of driving under suspension were those with indefinite license suspensions by the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court. These decisions were recently overturned by the Eighth District Ohio Court of Appeals, and it is estimated that more than 10,000 young adults are now eligible for a driver's license reinstatement.

Coyne's article noted the high costs of license reinstatement and the complicated fee structure. It would be interesting to know how much the state collects annually from Northeast Ohio drivers, so local leaders can have a sense of the economic impact on low-income families. Further, the only Bureau of Motor Vehicles office where license reinstatement fees can be paid is in Parma; only one RTA bus line serves that office, making it quite inaccessible.

The ability to drive is a matter of economic survival.

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