



Bill would suspend licenses for non-paying defendants

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York, PA - If you've been the victim of a crime involving a motor vehicle and you've still got money coming to you, you're not alone.

York County Clerk of Courts Don O'Shell estimates that in York County alone, offenders owe more than \$9 million worth of restitution -- generally in the form of medical bills or property damage.

He hopes that a bill sponsored by state Rep. Keith Gillespie, R-Hellam Township, would help persuade some of those people to pay up.

Gillespie's bill, which was recently passed unanimously out of the state House Transportation Committee, would allow Pennsylvania's courts to suspend the driver's license of any defendant who fails to pay full restitution to victims of driving-related offenses.

Gillespie said the key word is "allow." If those defendants can make a valid case for why they're unable to pay at the moment, and set up a payment plan, a judge would have some discretion as to whether to enact the suspension. But the legislation isn't directed at those having trouble paying, so much as those who simply refuse to pay.

"I think that's going to be a pretty good hammer to hold over some of these people," Gillespie said.

Gillespie's bill will now go before the full House. If it passes there and in the Senate, it will ultimately go to the governor for approval.

According to O'Shell, there are three types of liability for which the defendants are liable: fines imposed by the state as a punishment, court costs and restitution for victims.

Under the current system, 50 cents of every \$1 defendants send in for their fines are sent to victims

for restitution. But once those fines are paid off, the state's involvement ends.

At that point, it's up to the county to collect the restitution. Technically, the defendants still owe any that isn't paid, and can face sanctions including jail time.

The problem is the sheer volume of defendants involved, O'Shell said. He didn't have an exact number, but said there are easily thousands of people who owe restitution in York County alone, and only one judge to oversee those cases.

O'Shell said he finds it particularly objectionable because the state gets paid before the crime victims.

"Why is the state of Pennsylvania more important than the victim of the crime?" he said.


SPOTTING A FAKEThe Pennsylvania Department of Transportation on Monday began using a new security hologram that makes it easier to spot fake drivers' licenses and identification cards. Pennsylvania is the first state to use this measure.

The new hologram suppresses the "rainbow" colors normally associated with holographic images.

The result is a hologram that appears to switch between white and black as the image is moved. Also, because the new image is of a much higher resolution, it is clearly visible in bright, moderate and even low light.

For more information and to see an example of the

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