What To Do if They Don't Pay or Won't Comply?

Collecting Court Debt & Remedies

Learning Objectives:

- Review the statute of limitations, appeal considerations and understand difference between Department of Safety considerations vs. debt to city.
- 2. Explore the use of and limits to continuances and tools to gain compliance.
- 3. Understand proper setting of court costs, contrasted with litigation tax or fees.
- 4. Become familiar with options for collection, the pros and cons for each, and their statutory requirements.

Important Times

- 1) When is payment due?
 - 10 business days to appeal
 - \$250 Appeal bond: payable to municipal court
 - Payment plans
 - Interest

2) When is reporting to the state due?

Appeals

Appealed cases are heard in the circuit court, but city court should get the bond or a pauper's oath to perfect the appeal.

Tubwell v. Memphis, 413 S.W.3d 77, 79-80 (Tenn. Ct. App. 2013), appeal denied (Aug. 13, 2013).

City of Red Boiling Springs v. Whitley, 777 S.W.2d 706 (1989)

City of Brentwood v. Roberts, Not Reported in S.W.2d (1994)

City of Gatlinburg v. Bell, Not Reported in S.W.2d (1995)

Payment Plans/Interest

Indigent defendants (found upon affidavit and after hearing) do not have to pay court costs. http://www.tsc.state.tn.us/sites/default/files/docs/uniformaffidavitofindigency.pdf

Court may establish a payment plan.

Payment Plans/Interest

Court may charge interest on payment due. For current post-judgment interest rate (5.25%) see AOC website:

http://www.tsc.state.tn.us/node/1232344

- Self-effectuating statute (T.C.A. 47-14-121)
- Policy
- 6 month intervals, may change
- If you have court software, talk to your vendor

Important Times

- 1) When is payment due?
 - 10 business days to appeal
 - \$250 Appeal bond: payable to municipal court
- 2) When is reporting judgment to the state Department of Safety due?
 - 30 days after conviction
 - BUT need to report within 6 months of CITATION
 DATE for DOS to take action. TCA §55-50-502(a)(1)(I)
 - Important: watch continuances!

- 55-10-306. Record of traffic cases Report of convictions to department. —
- (b) (1) Within thirty (30) days after the conviction or forfeiture of bail of a person upon a charge of violating any provision of chapter 8, parts 1-5 of this chapter and § 55-12-139 or other law regulating the operation of vehicles on highways, every such magistrate or judge of the court or clerk of the court of record in which such conviction was had or bail was forfeited shall prepare and immediately forward to the department an abstract of the record of the court covering the case in which the person was so convicted or forfeited bail, which abstract must be certified by the person so required to prepare the same to be true and correct. Report need not be made of any conviction involving the illegal parking or standing of a vehicle.

Commercial Drivers

Effective January 1, 2011, the State reporting requirement for commercial vehicle convictions was **changed from 10 days to <u>5 days</u>** (Tenn. Code Ann. § 55-50-409) to comply with federal law.

- https://courtreport.safety.tn.gov/ will allow your clerk to report CDL violations online in order to comply. ("The Portal")
- See also, <u>https://www.tn.gov/safety/driverlicense/cdlcitation.shtml</u>

New Uniform Traffic Citation



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Traffic School

Submit Court Action Reports for cases dismissed upon completion of traffic school.

No points will be applied to driver's history.

This database is for YOU to see who has already attended traffic school and when.

Again, watch continuances.

- Policy (1 free)? - (+)Court cost? - both?

Costs and Fees

The city can only do things the state has authorized the city to do.

The state authorizes cities to establish and collect court costs.

The court cost ordinance should include all the "fees" or other charges charged by the court

- -Continuance fee v. "administrative fees"
- -MTAS can perform a study and give survey results



Failure to Pay (Satisfy)

Judgment=Debt owed to city. Collect as any other civil debt.

1) Warning letter

Sometimes Failure to Appear

- -Reset
- -Contempt on citation or if Separate FTA Ordinance, separate \$50 offense + cc
- 2) Report to DOS

License suspension Interstate Compact means effective in other states.

- 3) Aggregate, Turn over to City Attorney
 - -Warning letter, certified mail

Failure to Pay (Satisfy)

- 4) Turn over to Collections Agent
 - -Parking tickets have special requirements
- 5) Garnishment
 - -Wages, Accounts, Items
- 6) Convert to judgment
 - -Lien, Foreclosure, Sheriff's Sale



DO NOT ADD TO PROPERTY TAX BILL NO AUTHORITY

Partial Payment

- 1. First credited to litigation taxes (State gets paid first).
- 2. Next amount credited to costs,
- 3. Any additional money credited to **fines.**

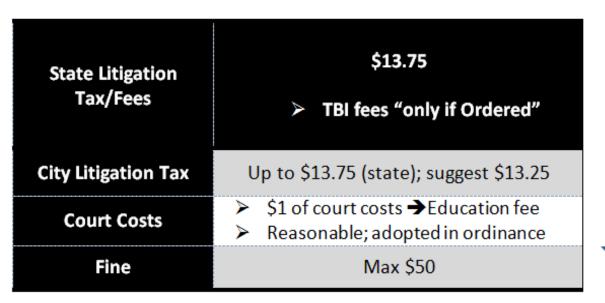
TCA§ 40-24-105(a), TN AG Opin. 12-52

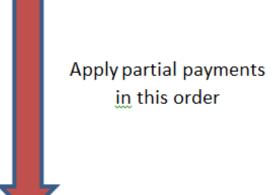
Collecting Court Fines & Costs

Order: Collect State Tax, Court Costs, then Fines

– TCA §40-24-105

Manner: same manner as civil judgments





Applying payment to multiple citations

Reasonableness standard

If \$300 applied to 3 outstanding citations?

State Tax	\$13.75	State Tax	\$13.75	State Tax	\$13.75
City Tax	\$ 13.75	City Tax	\$ 13.75	City Tax	\$ 13.75
City Court costs	\$76.00	City Court costs	\$76.00	City Court costs	\$76.00
Fines	\$50.00	Fines	\$50.00	Fines	\$50.00

Defendant owes \$460.50, but doesn't have enough...

\$300 IFIRST IN, IFIRST OUT \$13.75 **State Tax** \$146.50 \$13.75 **State Tax** \$ 13.75 City Tax \$ 13.75 City Tax \$13.75 **State Tax** City Court \$76.00 costs \$76.00 **City Court** \$ 13.75 City Tax \$50.00 **Fines** costs \$50.00 **Fines** \$76.00 **City Court** \$153.50 **TOTAL** costs

\$300-153.50=\$146.50

Ticket is disposed

\$146.50-\$153.50=

\$153.50

\$7 in fines still due

STILL DUE

Fines

THE UNIVERSITY of TENNESSEE

TOTAL

\$50.00

Collections Agent

- d) (1) The governing body of any municipality may by ordinance authorize the employment of a collection agency to collect fines and costs assessed by the municipal court where the fines and costs have not been collected within sixty (60) days after they were due. The authorizing ordinance shall include the requirement that the contract between the municipality and the collection agency be in writing.
- (2) The collection agency may be paid an amount not exceeding forty percent (40%) of the sums collected as consideration for collecting the fines and costs. \bigcirc

NEW 2014 ACT (Pub. Ch. 737) C

Effective Jan. 1, 2015

Collections agency fees can be added on top of amount due and paid out first.

- -after 6 months can begin to use agent, RFP
- -when paid into court, up to 40% of total can be withheld for agent

Collections Agent

- (3) The written contract between the collection agency and the municipality shall include a provision specifying whether the agency may institute an action to collect fines and costs in a judicial proceeding.
- (4) Nothing in this subsection (d) shall be interpreted to permit a municipality to employ a collection agency for the collection of unpaid parking tickets in violation of § 6-54-513.

Collections Agent: Parking

6-54-513. Notice to owner of motor vehicle before forwarding unpaid parking tickets to collection agency.

A municipality shall have no authority to forward to a collection agency unpaid parking tickets for collection without notifying the owner of record of the motor vehicle for which the parking ticket was issued. The notification shall be sent by **postal mail** to the owner of record of such motor vehicle that such action will occur unless the owner pays the unpaid tickets within thirty (30) days from the date the letter is mailed to the owner. The municipality shall also include in the **notification** a statement that, if the ticket is forwarded to a collection agency for collection, the agency may notify the credit bureau or credit agency of such fact, which could affect the owner's credit rating.

Collections Agent

Summary

You need:

- 1. an Ordinance
- 2. an RFP
- 3. a written contract
- 4. after 6 mo. elapsed, can use
- 5. for no more than _____% paid first
- 6. a separate collections letter to owner for parking violations with proper notice requirements after days overdue.

Contempt for FTP?

"When a defendant willfully fails to pay a fine "as directed," Tenn. Code Ann. § 40-24-104(a), the court may enforce the order assessing the <u>fine</u> by contempt, but **no person may be imprisoned for failure to pay litigation taxes or costs**, Tenn. Code Ann. § 40-24-105(a).

Because Section 40-24-105(a) expressly sets forth the manner in which partial payments are to be allocated, **trial courts are not** free to alter the allocation by order or to "show cause" a defendant for failure to promptly pay the fine. Courts have considerable discretion, however, in ordering both the amount of payments and the dates on which they fall due. See Tenn. Code Ann. § 40-24-101(a)(3). Such circumstances might give rise to confusion where the defendant complies with the plan but the payments under it are allocated by operation of law to taxes and costs. Courts can avoid this confusion by issuing payment orders that also address litigation taxes and court costs pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 40-24-105(b)(4)."

City Attorney

T.C.A. 40-24-105(b) The...municipal attorney...may, in that person's discretion, and shall, upon order of the court, institute proceedings to collect the fine, costs and litigation taxes as a civil judgment.

Garnishment

The court may take action to garnish wages: Through general sessions, circuit or chancery court

- 1. Must be filed in county where *employer* located.
- Up to 25% of disposable income (take home pay) may be garnished, but get in line behind others. Child support takes priority.
- 3. Costs of garnishment added to amount collected from wages.

Garnishment

Accounts

Exemptions from garnishment action:

- most retirement funds, including public pension funds paid to government retirees
- insurance funds, social security funds, disability payments, unemployment compensation, veterans benefits, child support payments
 - personal property up to \$4000
 - real property up to \$5000

Garnishment

Expires 6 months after service on employer

• - if max. 25% already garnished, 6 months does not run until earlier garnishment expires

Employer sends funds every 30 days

Garnishment of wages may be stayed by defendant entering payment plan

• - if default, stay is immediately nullified

Clerk must keep record of all payments and disbursements

IN THE GENERAL SESSIONS COURT FOR WILLIAMSON COUNTY FRANKLIN, TENNESSEE

Plaintiff (Creditor)						
Plaintill (Creditor)						
Vs.	Docket #					
Defendant (Debtor) SS#						
STATEMEN' GARNI	T FOR JUDGMENT CREDITOR REQUESTING SHMENT, EXECUTION, OR BANK LEVY E OF TENNESSEE, WILLIAMSON COUNTY					
	, Judgment Creditor, makes oath that the					
and the Judgment Creditors address for n	nailing any notice required by Title 26, Chapter 2, Part 4 of					
Judgment:	Judgment Creditor (Plaintiff)					
Date Amount Amount paid on Judgment						
Balance of Judgment						
Cost S Interest S	Place of employment or type of execution requested					
Requested by:						
Phone:						
	at must be accompanied by a responsibility of levy form signed by					

FOR A.D.A. assistance, please call

29

NOTICE TO JUDGMENT DEBTOR [TCA 26-2-404(a)] To collect a judgment against you in this lawsuit, your money or other property has been seized by execution or garnishment. An execution allows the sheriff to sell the property levied upon. A garnishment requires your bank (or other person holding your money or property) to transfer your property to the court or to hold it to satisfy the judgment. READ THIS CAREFULLY. YOU MAY BE ABLE TO KEEF YOUR MONEY OR PROPERTY OR GET IT BACK. State and federal laws prevent certain types of money or property from being used to pay a judgment. Such money or property is "exempt." Examples of exempt money are: Social Security benefits. SSL unemployment benefits. Veterano' benefits AFDC, and most government pensions. Examples of exempt property are certain health care side and "hools of trade." These examples of exempt money and property constitute only a partial list, and you may have other If you think you have exempt money or property that has been seized, you have the right to file a motion with the court clerk's office identified below claiming your exemption and asking for the release or return of your money You can get a form for filing this motion at the clerk's office below, or the clerk may have supplied such a form on the back of this notice. YOU SHOULD ACT QUICKLY. If you file a motion within twenty (20) days from the date this notice was mailed to you or was given to you, the court must hear and decide your motion promptly, and in no event later than fourteen (14) days from filing. The clerk will notify you of the time, date, and place of the hearing. IF YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND YOUR RIGHTS OR HOW TO EXCREDISE THEM, YOU MAY WISH TO CONSULT WITH A LAWYER, IF YOU CANNOT AFFORD A LAWYER, YOU MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR FREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE. The court clerk's office can provide you with forms and with information about legal services in your area, but the clerk cannot give you legal advice. NOTICE TO THE DEBTOR (EMPLOYEE) [TCA 26-2-216(b)(2)]: Your earnings have been subjected to a garnishment which has been served upon your employer. The garnishment creates a lien on a portion of your wages until the judgment is satisfied, or for six (6) months, whichever occurs first. You have the following rights: Some of your wages are protected by state and federal law from parnishment. See the notices below [OR ON REVERSEL to the employer to find out how much of your wages are protected from garnishment. IF YOUR EMPLOYER IS TAKING TOO MUCH MONEY FROM YOUR WAGES: You may apply to the court at the clerk's office shown below within twenty (20) days from any improper withholding of your wages for a motion to stop the garnishment. The court clerk identified below shall provide you with a form for making such a motion, or may have supplied a form motion on the back of this notice. You may wish to seek the counsel of a lawyer. If you are unable to afford an attorney, you may be eligible for free legal services to assist you. PLEASE NOTE: If you file a motion, the court must hear and decide your motion promptly, and in no event later than fourteen (14) days from filing. The clerk will notify you of the time, date, and the place of hearing. The court clerk's office can provide you with forms and with information about legal services in your area, but the clerk cannot give you legal advice. IF THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF MONEY IS BEING TAKEN FROM YOUR WAGES BUT YOU WANT TO GET THE GARNISHMENT STOPPED THROUGH A PAYMENT PLAN: You may apply to the court for an order suspending further garnishments by the same creditor upon your paying a certain sum of money weekly, biweekly, or monthly, to pay the judgment. If you file this motion, the garnishment of your wages will stop for as long as you make the payments ordered by the court. The court clerk shall provide you with the necessary forms to make this application, or you may seek the counsel of an attorney. If you are unable to afford an attorney, you may be eligible for free legal services to assist you. TO ALL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS: NAME: Court THESE FUNDS ARE ATTACHED AND SHALL BE PAID INTO COURT WITHOUT FURTHER ADDRESS: TELEPHONE: OFFICER'S RETURN (other than wage garnishment); executed as follows: [OR] executed by LEVYING on the following described property: On this _____ day of ______ 20_____. Deputy Sheriff/Constable OFFICER'S RETURN (on wage garnishment) [TCA 26-2-216(b)(1)(A)] I acknowledge receipt of 3 copies of the gamishment summons on the abovementioned employee on day of

Executed by serving

Deputy Sheriff/Constable

On this day of , 20 .

AFFIDAVIT FOR EXECUTION Case/Docket No. Having first been duly sworn according to law, I hereby EXECUTION make oath that the following information is true to the best of my knowledge and belief: COUNTY COURT ☐ Garnishment ☐ Levy Judgment Creditor's Address for mailing notices required on Financial Institution/Bank TCA 26-2-402: Plaintiff VS Telephone No.: Judgment Debtor's Name and Last Known Address: Defendant Judgment Debtor's SSN/EIN: □ To: Employer (if wage garnishment) or other garnishee Address: Telephone No.: Balance on Judgment including original Cost \$ □ To: Financial Institution/Bank Judgment Creditor/Agent Account No: Sworn to and subscribed before me on day of Letry On: Deputy Clerk/Notary Public My Commission Expires: AFFIDAVIT FOR OFFICER WAGE GARNISHMENT Application for Execution , Deputy Sheriff/Constable after The Judgment Creditor hereby makes application to the Clerk of the being sworn, make oath that: Court to have an Execution in the above styled case to satisfy a judgment against the Judgment Debtor(s) herein: ☐ A garnishment summons was served on _____ employer garnishee, on day of Date of Judgment and that the employer garnishee refused to sign a receipt acknowledging service of said summons. Judgment Balance [TCA 26-2-216(b)(1)(B)] Pre-Paid Cost RE: COPY FURNISHED JUDGMENT DEBTOR Interest A copy of the execution by levy was mailed to the judgment debtor at the address provided pursuant to Clark's Fees TCA 26-2-402 or was provided by actual hand delivery. Officer's Fee ITCA 26-2-4051 Total Deputy Sheriff/Constable Judgment Creditor/Agent Commission Exp: Issued this day of , 20 Notary My Commission Exp Rev. 11/08

Liens

If defendant is a property owner, a lien may be assessed against his/her property

General Sessions judgments in excess of \$500 become automatic liens, all others require judgment from court of record

- File suit in Circuit or Chancery court
- Exception certain code enforcement actions (e.g., grass)

After obtain judgment from court of record, file certified judgment with register of deeds

Liens

Drawbacks:

- Only paid if property sells
- If lien is paid, must release lien with the register of deeds ASAP, or face potential liability (criminal and civil)

How Long Do We Have to Collect?

Citations – misdemeanors must be prosecuted within **12 months**, or expire

— If not heard, invalid after 1 year (T.C.A. 40-2-102) Cf. DOS-6 months or no suspension

Judgments – good for 10 years

- T.C.A. 25-5-105(b) and T.C.A. 28-3-110

May still receive payment, but no garnishment or collection action should be taken after 10 years

NON-COMPLIANCE

Often comes up in Code Enforcement cases.

- 1) Use of continuance for compliance
- 2) Contempt (next session)
- 3) Injunctive relief (turn over to City Attorney) Policy? (3 strikes? Serious harm?)

ONLY ONE EXCEPTION TO MONEY JUDGMENTS

Administrative Inspection Warrants

See § 68-120-117.

Go to MTAS-1081, Administrative Inspection Warrants

Who May Use Warrant Process?

What Courts May Issue Warrants?

Proof Needed to Apply for a Warrant

How Long Must a City Wait for a Warrant?

What Must the Warrant State?

How Long is the Warrant Active?

Administrative Inspection Warrant Issues

Sample Administrative Inspection Warrant

Sample Affidavit and Administrative Inspection

See also, http://tmaa.us/contributions/admin_warrants.htm



MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICE

Municipal Technical Advisory Service

in cooperation with the Tennessee Municipal League

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Courts

This page provides materials for court clerks in Tennessee cities

Report a broken link or problem with this page.

Contact Us

Karen Blake, Municipal Court Specialist | 615.532.7108

Registration questions? Contact Doug Brown, Administrative Specialist II |

865 974 9140

MTAS Resources

How to Register for an MTAS Course - Click on Solution Point on the HOME page above, create an account, and sign up.

Child Restraint and Seatbelt Law Fines and Costs Flowchart

Daily Cash Transaction Report Form

ISpeak Cards 2004: Language Identification Flashcards

Municipal Courts Manual

Open Records: A Guide for Municipal Officials

State Resources

Acceptable Forms of Identification - Examples of TN Citizenship Documents, if address shows TN address

Accessibility to the Courts: ADA Policy

Fines and Fees Report: Seatbelt and Child Restraint Violations Form (TDOS)

Foreign Language Interpreters

Internet Court Action Report Instructions (TDOS)

Litigation Fines and Fees Return: Education Fee Form (TDR)

Litigation Tax Return: Litigation Tax Form (TDR)

Tennessee Office of Open Records Counsel

Uniform Disposition of Unclaimed Property Act Reporting Forms & Instructions 2014 - Use this manual for unclaimed refunds and

overpayments

Uniform Traffic Citation (TN)

Federal Resources

49 C.F.R. Part 284 Section 284.226 - (Prohibition on Masking Convictions, State Compliance with Commercial Driver's License Program.)

General Resources

Department of Safety Information for Customers - Provides links to information on Reinstatement Centers and Financial Responsibility FAQs

MTAS Courts Link

Search for **MTAS COURTS**

MTAS: Promoting better city government through direct assistance to city officials and their associations



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