

TESTIMONY BEFORE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, November 18, 2009

Thank you Chairman Meadows and committee members. Before I continue, with the committee's permission I would like to ask someone to join me at the table whose chosen profession has given him a recognition and in-depth understanding of the consequences of the Driver's Responsibility Act, Judge William C. Buhl, Judge 36th Judicial Circuit, Van Buren County Michigan.

Today is our opportunity to be honest with the people of Michigan. In June of this year I presented testimony to this committee on the devastating impact of the Driver's Responsibility Act and its fees.

This is what we know. This draconian law is making criminals of ordinary citizens. This flawed law and its fees have taken judicial discretion away from our courts. Judges such as Judge Buhl can no longer consider the circumstances of the event. This flawed law has forced people to remain in custody because of their inability to pay the fees.

We know that people who can pay do pay. Unfortunately, too many citizens who are struggling to make ends meet are forced to choose between financing the State or paying a mortgage note, grocery bills, or utility bills.

This flawed law says pay or surrender your right to drive. Do not pay and your license is suspended. You no longer have the right to drive to pay bills, get groceries, go to the hospital. Drive now and incur additional fines, points and fees. Accumulate too many points and pay more fees.

The Act has failed in its purpose to change bad drivers into good drivers. From the statistics presented by the Michigan Department of State we know that the number of fee assessments for offenses such as "Operating while intoxicated" or "impaired", and "Operating causing serious injury" or death have only increased slightly.

However, there are fee assessments that have increased more than 4 or 5 times the number assessed when the Driver's Responsibility Act went into effect. They are for "No insurance" and "Drove while license suspended." These are not life threatening offenses. They are a matter of personal finances. Insurance rates climb not based on personal driving record, but on residential address and credit score. Yet one must be insured to drive or pay the fine and the Driver's Responsibility Fee. Again one is forced to choose between paying the insurance company or paying a mortgage note, grocery bills, or utility bills.

WHERE DOES IT STOP?

The tragedy of the Driver's Responsibility Act and its fees can also be seen by its dismal 45% collection rate. Why so dismal. Those who can pay, pay. Those who cannot, do not. They have no choice.

Please don't give into the false hope that delaying fees are limiting fees will enable people to pay the State. Our people are living in the worse economic times since the recession of the 1970's. Those who cannot pay will still be unable to pay.

There are other revenue options to be considered. We need to fine tune, with great care our revenue generation. This reverse tax on our financially distressed citizens must end and end now.

Today is the day for we as elected representatives of the people to break this "cycle of impoverishment". Today is the day we tell the people of Michigan your state recognizes the fact that the Driver's Responsibility Act and its fees are a huge mistake. Today is the day we say your state is willing to support HB 4098 to repeal its mistake and also help you recover from the mistake we know as the Driver's Responsibility Act.

Thank you.

Bettie C. Scott
State Representative
District 003.

State Representative

Bettie



Scott

District - 003

DRIVER'S RESPONSIBILITY ACT

Town Hall Meeting - November 16, 2009

Call to Order.....Reverend William O. Thompson
New Greater Christ Church
Chairman, People for Bettie Scott

Opening Prayer.....Reverend Steven J. Essemburg
Charity Lutheran Church

Welcome.....Lee Black
Chief of Staff

Opening Presentation.....Bettie C. Scott
State Representative

Guest Speaker.....Honorable Deborah Lewis Langston
Judge - 36th District Court

Guest Speaker.....Shelli Wesiberg
American Civil Liberties Union

Comments from attendees

Closing Prayer.....Reverend William O. Thompson

State Representative

Bettie Scott



District - 003

DRIVER RESPONSIBILITY ACT

TOWN HALL MEETINGS

Monday, November 16, 2009

6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Charity Lutheran Church

17220 Kelly Road, Detroit, Michigan

Featured Speaker:

Hon. Deborah Lewis Langston

36th District Court



Monday, November 30, 2009

6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

New Greater Christ Baptist Church

13031 Charlevoix Avenue, Detroit, Michigan

Featured Speaker:

Hon. Shelia Johnson

46th District Court



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