

Input on Possible Protections Against Unjust Towing from People Living in Their Vehicles

Collected by Housekeys Action Network Denver, March 2022

We talked to 22 people living in their vehicles about issues with towing and asked them to fill out an input form. Respondents checked next to issues they thought should be included in a bill to protect against towing.

Key Takeaway –

- People living in their vehicles are regularly losing their vehicle, which is their home, due to towing costs and other issues.
- People living in their vehicles we spoke with support all or most of these potential measures to address issues with towing.
- More work is needed to understand exactly what laws and procedures need changed, but it is clear there are many issues leading to unjust towing.

19 said there should be **“No towing for lack of payment of small parking or traffic tickets”**

Notes:

There should be a limit so its not excessive especially for someone who has limited income and fee upon fee is imposed so they can never pay the fines.

14 said there should be **“No towing for not having proof of registration”**

15 said that towing for no proof of registration should **“At least not be done without giving notice and time for owner to get registration”**

Notes:

Bare Minimum

Plenty of time (way more than a couple of weeks)

At least 4 days - days not months

13 said that vehicles **“Should not be towed for ‘junker’ vehicle law”**

11 said junker laws should only be used **“If the city has proven the vehicle can't move”**

14 said junker laws should only be used **“If the owner has had time and notice”**

Notes:

Ample time - a lot

16 said junker laws should only be used **“If the owner is given the option to have their vehicle towed to a place they want instead of impounded”**

Notes:

Help for people w/out money \$180 hook up plus \$5 / mile

15 said there should be **“No requirement to show insurance in order to get your vehicle out of impound”**

Notes:

This is less important to me within the context of this issue

Depends what it is for

18 said there should be **“More notice before towing”**

Notes:

The most

At least two weeks to allow person to make arrangements

20 said lots should **“Reduce the cost of getting a vehicle out of impound”**

Notes:

Starred

All of it

Definitely

\$50 fee standard, higher if suspect illegal activity involved, reduce overhead

19 said that lots should **“Allow owner to retrieve their property from their vehicle before towing or in towing lot”**

Notes:

Starred

Starred

As long as monitored by authority

Here are the additional suggestions respondents gave:

-You should not have to sign over vehicle to get your property out of it

-Offer a payment plan

-Option to park for longer period of time

-Should not be towed for minor repair needs like need to change battery

-Have safe places for folx to be able to park in areas w/ services (sos for people in vehicles)

-It should not be illegal to live in a vehicle and should be able to park wherever

-Quit stealing cars to make money for the city. If it's an eyesore, feel free and go back to wherever it was you came from

-I feel like if someone is homeless that they should not get towed

-There should be safe parking areas for folx to safely park that would not be harassed with amenities like bathrooms, showers, etc

- The city should be more lenient on how they boot your car
- More safe parking available wherever you go as a national network
- Make it easier to sue towing companies. Make it possible to take legal action against the officers who ticket and/or authorize someone else to tow your vehicle (make it so even they can be held accountable and not always just us being put on the defensive). Also set up a legitimate and effective system by which to contest having had your vehicle ticketed and/or towed (complaining to the police agency who ticketed you in the first place is an inherently biased joke!)
- They should stop stealing people's property and auctioning it off before a person is able to get out of jail on false charges
- They should have a process where people can report former towing violations, maybe through the BBB or otherwise, and be compensated for wrongful towing

Feedback from Meeting

We also discussed the issue of towing at our community meeting with people who lived in their vehicles and this is the input we got.

- Ability to get property out of vehicle even if vehicle is trashed
- Programs for impounded cars to be used to upgrade for poor people
- Need grace period before get fees
- Registration that last forever for older vehicles
- There should be payment programs
- Cost of towing should go towards registration and such
- Towing companies should be penalized for illegal selling
- There should be no requirement on time in lot
- Need to be able to retrieve tags for parking from car

Conclusion

Further discussion and work is needed to flesh out these issues, but this gives some initial direction for how we might move forward in stopping towing which is leading to countless people living in their vehicles losing the place they live and left to the streets.

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