

# Why is the fine for a basic traffic infraction in the state of Washington such a random-looking number?

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March 9, 2010



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Willy-Peter Schaub was puzzled by a sign reminding drivers that the fine for obstructing an intersection is \$101 and wonders what the extra \$1 is for. The laws of the State of Washington defer the monetary value of traffic fines to the Infraction Rules for Courts of Limited Jurisdiction (more commonly known as the IRLJ), specifically section 6.2: Monetary Penalty Schedule for Traffic Infractions [pdf]. But wait, the fine listed in the IRLJ is only \$42. Where did \$101 come from? In addition to the base fine in the IRLJ, RCW 3.62.090 specifies additional assessments: Section (1) specifies a 70% assessment for public safety and education, and section (2) specifies an additional public safety and education assessment equal to 50% of the earlier assessment. On top of that, RCW 46.63.110 specifies various fees and penalties: Section 7(a) specifies a \$5 fee for emergency services, section 7(b) specifies a \$10 fee for auto theft prevention, section 7(c) specifies a \$2 fee for the traumatic brain injury account, and section 8(a) specifies a \$20 penalty to be shared between the state and the local jurisdiction. There are probably other clauses which add to the fines and penalties. I remember investigating this a few years ago and convincing myself that after taking all the fines and penalties and assessments and whatever-else-they-call-its into account, the total did come to \$101. (Actually, they bring it to something close to \$101, and then another rule about rounding kicks in.)

And you won't get the numbers to add up to \$101 any more because there were changes to the fee schedule in July 2007. The fine for basic traffic infractions is now \$124. The new calculation appears to be  $42 \times 2.05 + 5 + 10 + 2 + 20 = \$123.10$ , which rounds up to \$124.



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