

Website services help drivers fight tickets

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Summer is the busiest travel season, and that means long stretches of highway, wandering attention and maybe a few miles through counties or states spent over the speed limit.

Then, the flashing police lights and miserable pull-over.

It can happen anytime and anywhere: along rural roads, in speed traps, big cities or daily commutes.

A few new platforms have emerged to offer drivers a chance to fight back - by playing the courtroom odds and helping customers choose the most successful lawyers. While automated ways to fight traffic tickets have been around for a while - mostly serving to refer customers to law firms or simply paying charges through a court website - entrepreneurs behind the new platforms say they offer greater flexibility for payments and a deeper understanding of traffic violation and court data.

Off The Record is a Seattle-based [platform](#) launched in September 2015, covering 18 states including California, Washington, New York, New Jersey and Texas. Its [mobile app](#) links to a digital platform, connecting aggrieved drivers and local attorneys.

The startup idea formed after a group of friends, including co-founder Alex Guirguis, were pulled over when returning from a camping trip in Oregon over Labor Day weekend. Four cars in the group were pulled over at different times and cited for speeding.

The friends looked for a digital solution to finding local attorneys to fight the violations. They had little luck, and ended up paying the tickets, he said. "We realized there was definitely an opportunity here," Guirguis said.

Guirguis and his co-founders found estimates that about 40 million tickets are issued to U.S. drivers annually, and less than 5 percent are disputed in court.

Guirguis quit his software engineering job at Amazon and formed Off The Record in January 2015. The company recruits local lawyers to sign up. The attorneys set their own rates, court locations and expertise.

Drivers take a picture of their ticket and include other relevant information through the website or mobile app.

Clients are referred to lawyers, and the two sides can communicate over the secure platform or by phone and email. An attorney will make court appearances and file papers challenging the ticket. Off The Record charges attorneys a fee for each case they accept.

Guirguis said the platform has succeeded in bringing down legal costs for customers, since the software allows platform users to see the range of prices for similar services.

When the company opened the platform in San Francisco, legal fees ranged from \$195 to \$1,100 to handle similar, routine violations, he said. Average legal fees on the platform for San Francisco lawyers now average between \$200 and \$250, he said. Rates have also fallen in Silicon Valley courtrooms, he said.

Off The Record has about 250 lawyers and has handled about 5,000 tickets. It boasts a high success rate at reducing violations and preventing

points from accumulating on a driver's record.

If a driver runs into problems outside of California, TIKD - pronounced "ticked" - has opened a platform on the east coast. It's website-based, with plans for a mobile app.

TIKD was founded by a former Naval officer and Harvard Business School grad, Chris Riley, who was stopped in a speed trap in Miami. Riley requested three years worth of traffic violation data from the local courts. Riley analyzed the data and realized the inefficiencies in the system of fighting violations.

The company believes it can win the majority of cases, spreading around the risk and savings to consumers, said spokeswoman Louise Finlay. The company has handled thousands of tickets, she said.

"There's no other service that does exactly what we do," Finlay said.

TIKD allows users to photograph the violation and submit relevant information. Unlike Off the Record, TIKD requires users to pay an upfront fee - typically between \$150 and \$400, depending on the seriousness and location of the infraction. TIKD hires an attorney to fight the claims. The driver pays one fee, and gets a refund if points are not removed from his or her record. Customers are updated on the status of their ticket throughout the legal process.

The startup was launched in February, and covers markets in Florida, Georgia, and the greater Washington, D.C. metro area. It hopes to reach 30 major metropolitan markets next year, Finlay said.

Jeremy Simon, a private attorney in Florida, said the service has referred about 200 tickets to his firm since June. Simon said some lawyers have resisted the new platforms, but he's seen it increase his business. He

thinks it could eventually encourage more people to fight their tickets and drive down legal fees.

"It challenges the established paradigm," Simon said. "This is the future. You have to adapt."

Other [law firms](#) and lawyers specializing in traffic tickets advertise widely online. The Ticket Clinic, a law firm offering services primarily in California and Florida, boasts a 30-year history of fighting violations from speeding to DUIs. The firm says it has handled 3 million violations.

If a driver is really stuck and can't get points removed from his or her license, there are other options. The Oakland-based company DriversEd.com sells state-approved, online courses that gives California drivers a chance to reduce points and lower insurance premiums.

Digital services to fight traffic tickets

Off The Record—A Seattle-based startup that runs a platform connecting drivers with lawyers. The service gauges attorney success rates, and guarantees a reduction in traffic points.

TIKD—Pronounced "ticked," the website offers services for a flat fee and takes care of legal costs and fines. It's available in certain East Coast cities, and plans to expand to more major metropolitan markets.

The Ticket Clinic—A law firm with a network of offices in California and Florida. The firm boasts 30 years of representing drivers.

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