

Program offers savings for overdue traffic tickets, court fees to run Feb. 22 through March 6

By MEGHAN BRADBURY - | Feb 10, 2021

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It's that time of year again when Lee County residents with overdue traffic tickets or court fees can take part in Operation Green Light and reinstate their driver's license for less.

Clerk Linda Doggett said with the State Legislature's desire to have Operation Green Light earlier in the year, they opted to have it Monday, Feb. 22 through Saturday, March 6. That decision was based on people typically receiving their tax refund either in late February, early March.

Doggett said individuals can tie that tax refund into making a payment and getting their overdue traffic tickets or court fees taken care of and getting their drivers license back.

"That is why we picked this particular time to do Operation Green Light," Doggett said.

Operation Green Light in Lee County will be held from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, Feb. 22, through Thursday, March 4, from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Friday, March 5, with virtual taking place after 5 p.m. and from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. virtual only Saturday, March 6.

Doggett said the after hours, and weekend hours are great for those working, as they are virtual this time around. It also benefits those who have a suspended drivers license as they do not have to leave their house to take care of overdue fees.

This year the Operation Green Light's focus is traffic citations and any other overdue court fines. During Operation Green Light, the 25 percent fee that the collection agency adds is being waived.

"That is a great sale on getting your drivers license back," Doggett said.

Individuals can either take part in Operation Green Light through TeleClerk video conference or by calling (239) 533-5000.

Doggett said those who do not come into the office must use a credit card to pay for their overdue traffic tickets or court fees due to it being an electronic transaction. Individuals who wish to pay with cash are asked to call and make an appointment at either the Justice Center, 2075 MLK Blvd. in Fort Myers, or 1039 9th Pl. in Cape Coral.

Payment plans with substantial savings also are available. Once court fees and traffic fees are paid in full, customers may have the chance to reinstate their drivers license.

Masks are required to come into the office and screening and temperatures will be taken.

“The Justice Center is one of the safest places to come into because of all that is enforced. Everything is cleaned regularly and there is hand sanitizer everywhere,” Doggett said.

Over the last few years, she said they have been very successful in getting toll violations under control during Operation Green Light. That has been achieved by having an actual collection agency take care of the violations, instead of the court system.

“The toll violations were out of control. The county was utilizing the court system as a collection agency for people that didn’t pay toll violations,” Doggett said. “People would run the tolls 10, 20 times. It created a drivers license suspension for them.”

She said there was a \$100 late fee added to the toll violation, as well as a \$100 filling fee by the court system. It became an outrageous amount of money that people owed, some reaching almost \$5,000.

Now the county is using a collection agency, which has proven to be a better process. A step further was taken with all toll violations reduced to \$10 with a license reinstatement fee as an additional cost.

“We are doing that as an ongoing basis. They don’t have to wait for Operation Green Light,” Doggett said. “Go to the website (www.LeeClerk.org) and make an appointment with the clerk to get that taken care of. Just call, go the website and make an appointment, or come to the office.”

Last year’s Operation Green Light helped nearly 850 customers save more than \$1 million. Among those customers, 545 were able to reinstate their drivers license.

“A lot of the nearly 850 customers were tolls,” Doggett said. “This year we will still get a lot of toll violations show up. If it’s a toll violation they are trying to solve, they can take care of that year round.”