

***A View from the Bench***  
**Collection of Fines and Court Costs**  
***by Union City Court Judge Linda Wilcox***

January 20, 2022

Today's topic is collections of fines and Court costs. Background information may be helpful. When you admit or are found guilty of an Infraction or Ordinance Violation, you are assessed a fine and Court costs. The fines on Infractions are set by the Indiana Legislature. The range for fines on Ordinance Violations is established by the City Council. All Court costs are determined by the Indiana Legislature and frequently increase on an annual basis. Currently, the Court costs are \$135.50, and fines vary according to the offense.

In most cases, you are granted a period of time to pay your fine and Court costs. At the conclusion of that time, if you have not paid, you are assessed a \$25.00 late fee. Should you fail to pay the assessed amount at that time, your case is referred to collections through an Indiana State Court Administration approved collection agency, who specialize in the collection of Court-related debit. The Court must receive the entire amount you owe. However, the collection agency is authorized to add a collection fee of up to 30% of the debit. So, you can see just how costly this can become. If you have a fine of \$10.00, Court costs of \$135.50 plus \$25.00 late fee and a 30% collection fee of \$51.15, you now owe a total of \$221.65!

Let's spend a few minutes discussing "old debit". You may think that because your debit to the Court is many years old, you are no longer responsible for it. Your debit to the Court does not have the benefit of statute of limitation. You owe the debit regardless of whether it is ninety days old or ninety years old. The Court reviewed all available records dating back to 2006 and referred the outstanding debit to the collection agency. If you receive a notice of an attempt to collect a Court related debt, you should contact the collection agency as soon as possible and establish a plan to pay. Once your debit has been referred to collections, you must contact them directly. The Court can no longer assist you with your payment at that time. Once your debit is paid, you will receive a receipt of payment.

Your frustration at being faced with a debit collection after years of thinking the matter was resolved is understandable. Nevertheless, if you owe, you must pay. If you believe that your debit was wrongly referred to collections and you have documentation, please contact the Court directly. The Court will research your case, review your documentation, and make the appropriate adjustment.