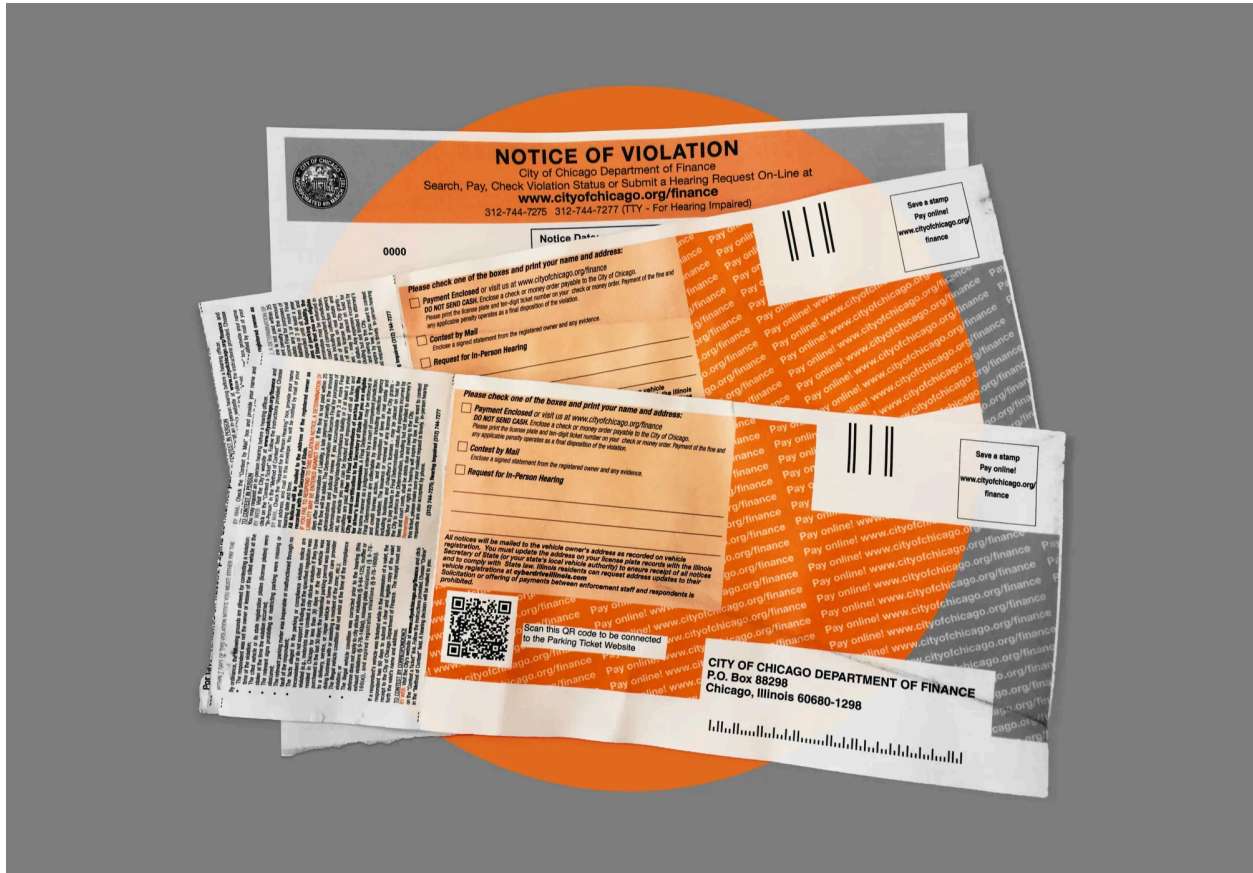


You Might Not Need to Pay the \$77!

Take it to the Streets
by Michael Mei (2025)



51.6 million. That is the dollar amount that ward 11 has owed the city of Chicago between Jan. 1, 1996 to May 14, 2018. But this is a number that you don't have to contribute to. Did you know that **you can apply for an appeal for the ticket** and throw that ticket away?

What are Drivers Like You Being Commonly Ticketed for?

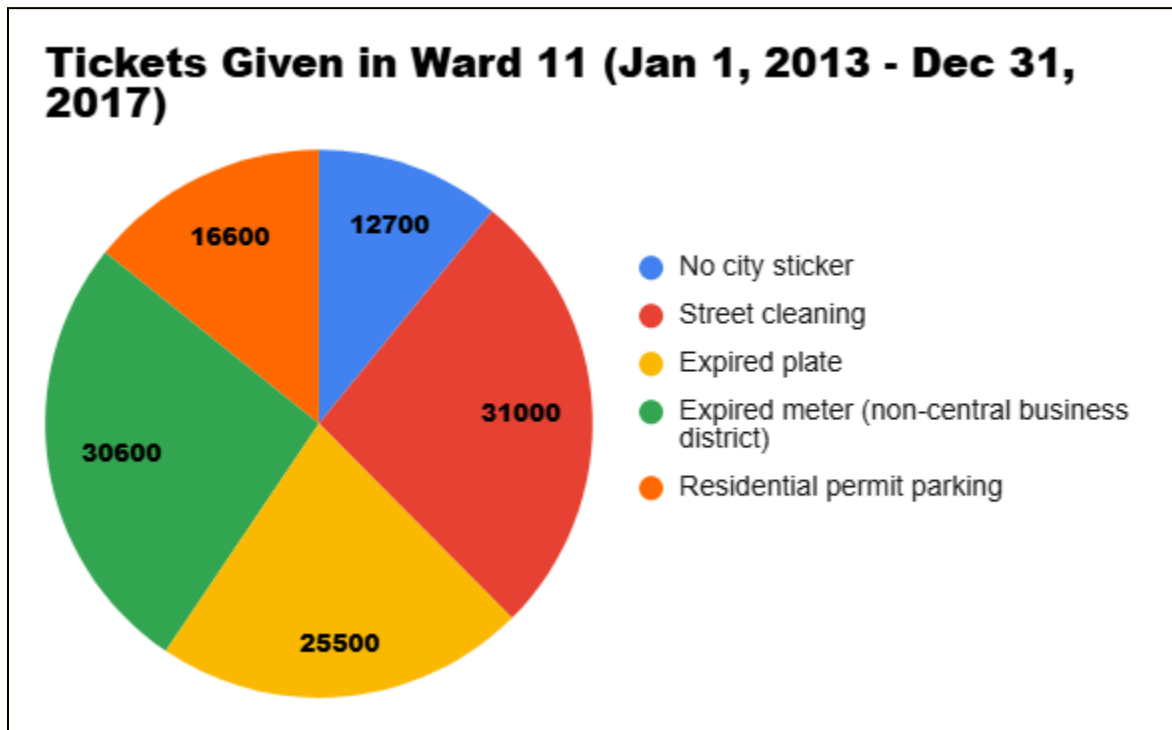


Figure 1: Violations between 2013 and 2017.

The amount of tickets total to 116,400 from Figure 1, and with the average ticket being \$77, this comes close to a total of \$9 million in fines. The figure also reveals that the most common violations are **streeting cleaning (26.6%)** and **expired meter (26.3%)** violations.

Focusing on the most common cases and using a sample population of street cleaning violations provided by ProPublica, we find that unfortunately, more than 50% of people do not attempt to submit their ticket for an appeal.

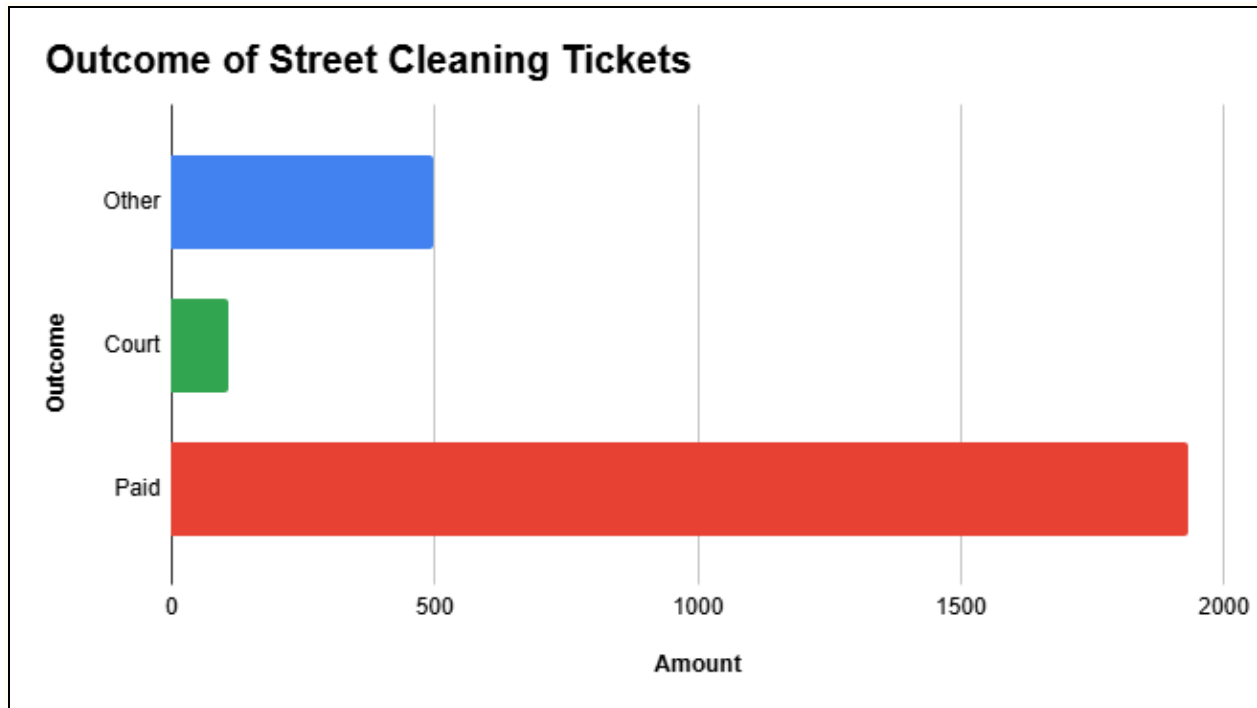


Figure 2: Outcome of Street Cleaning Tickets (Sample).

However, this metric does not tell the full story! Out of the minority that contested their tickets between 2013 and 2017, **60% won and had the fine thrown out after an administrative hearing!**

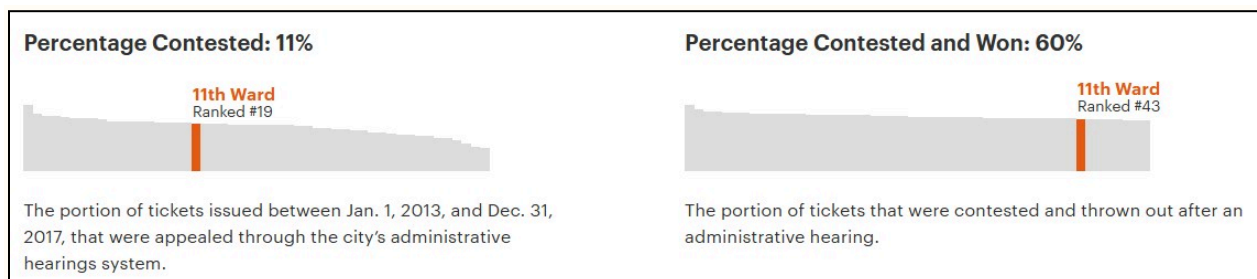


Figure 3: Percentage of motorists who contested and won.

The Appeal Process

***Before applying, make sure that the violation is defendable! See Defenses Section for list of allowable defense.**

Applying is free, and the worst that can happen is you still have to pay. So provided here is a guide to applying for the appeal and advice on how to argue your case.

Here is a list of **required document** you will need:

- **Evidence**
- For example, if the meter was broken, then you can get a picture of the broken parking meter. **Ticket**

You will need to locate the **Ticket Number** located on the top left corner of the ticket.

Once you have gathered the material, there are 3 ways the city has provided you to appeal your ticket. You can click on each point to send you to the official website.

- [Online](#)
- [In-Person](#)
- [Mail](#)

According to a [CBS story](#) motorist Brockway — who has successfully challenged many of his tickets — believes that *"it's best to state your case in person at a hearing rather than by mail. It's more informal, and you're able to have a discussion with the hearing officer."* I agree with him, because appearing in person shows that you're willing to make the extra effort to contest the ticket, which can help demonstrate that you're in the right.

Ultimately, the choice is yours, and you should use whichever method you prefer. After all, we don't always have the means to travel to a hearing, especially after receiving a ticket.

How to Defend your Case

Now that you have scheduled or sent an appeal, you will need to explain your side of the story. Here is a list of allowable defenses:

***9-100-060 Grounds for contesting a violation**

1. A person charged with a parking, standing or compliance violation may contest the charge through an administrative adjudication limited to one or more of the following grounds with appropriate evidence to support:
 1. that the respondent was not the owner or lessee of the cited vehicle at the time of the violation;
 2. that the cited vehicle or its state registration plates were stolen at the time the violation occurred;
 3. that the relevant signs prohibiting or restricting parking or standing were missing or obscured;
 4. that the relevant parking meter was inoperable or malfunctioned through no fault of the respondent;
 5. that the facts alleged in the violation notice are inconsistent or do not support a finding that the specified regulation was violated;
 6. that the illegal condition described in the compliance violation notice did not exist at the time the notice was issued;
 7. that the compliance violation has been corrected prior to adjudication of the charge;
2. The full list can be found [HERE](#)

What to say and not say

Avoid admitting you violated the parking rules, you are trying to show that you are in the right here. Saying that you had to leave your car because you had to use the restroom badly or crying in the courtroom hardly works for sympathy.

Address the judge or hearing officer with their proper formalities like "Sir/Ma'am" or "Your honor".

How to sound persuasive

The more sound your argument, the stronger your evidence will be. There are three rhetorical appeals (Pathos, Logos, and Ethos) you can include. Below is an example of how they can be applied to your argument but you can construct them in any order.

1. **Ethos.** You can use this as your introduction to establish your **credibility**. It can go something like this: *"Good morning, Your Honor/Hearing Officer. My name is _____. I'm here because I believe this citation was issued in error, and I want to respectfully explain the circumstances"*. Maybe you are a known member of the community, and your proper language puts you in a more believable position.
2. **Logos.** This can be used to present your **factual explanation** or evidence. If the time and date on the ticket was incorrect then you could say: *"On the date and time listed, my vehicle was parked at _____. The posted signage indicates _____. Based on the rules for that area, I was parked legally. Here are photographs showing the sign placement and the view from where my car was positioned."* Numbers and photos are what give your argument reason.
3. **Pathos.** Now that your evidence has been present, you should ask for **fairness**. *I understand the importance of following parking rules, and I make every effort to comply. In this case, however, the ticket does not reflect the situation accurately. I'm asking for a fair review of the evidence I've provided"*.
4. Do not forget to include a closing to thank them for their time and consideration.

Closing

Contesting a ticket is not only your right, it's often an effective way to correct honest mistakes in the enforcement process. With clear evidence, confident delivery, and a structured argument, many motorists successfully have their tickets reduced or dismissed.

If you have found this information useful, please complete this (assuming this is a link) survey. You can choose to skip any part, but I would like to know your thoughts about this resource and outcome of your contest.

References

<https://features.propublica.org/driven-into-debt/chicago-ticket-debt-bankruptcy/>

<https://projects.propublica.org/chicago-tickets/>

<https://projects.propublica.org/chicago-tickets/ward/11>

<https://www.propublica.org/article/chicago-mayor-lori-lightfoot-proposes-further-traffic-ticket-reforms-to-help-low-income-motorists>

https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/fin/provdrs/parking_and_redlightcitationadministration/svcs/view_automated_speedenforcementvideo1.html

https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/fin/supp_info/revenue/parking_and_red-lightnoticeinformation5/contest_in_person.html

https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/fin/supp_info/revenue/parking_and_red-lightnoticeinformation5/contest_by_mail.html

<https://www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/parking-tickets-contest-administrative-hearing-challenge/>

https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/chicago/latest/chicago_il/0-0-0-2647579