

# The Boston Globe

EDITORIAL

## Boston should lower fee for parking-ticket appeals

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The city of Boston reaps in excess of [\\$60 million in annual parking fine revenue](#), and the average parking enforcement officer writes more than 9,000 tickets per year. Illegally parked motorists are proverbial sitting ducks for the city's parking enforcement machine, which is aggressive, usually unforgiving, but far from perfect. It metes out rough justice at best, as do other municipal parking enforcers, and when a motorist appeals the fine and loses on the town or city level, the only option is Superior Court — and a remarkably high court filing fee of \$275. Massachusetts is the only state in the country with such a draconian appeals process.

Only motorists determined to prevail on principle would pursue the Superior Court route, which is otherwise financially prohibitive and inconsistent with the notion of providing affordable access to the court system. In almost every other state, such appeals are heard in small claims court or district court.

A Supreme Judicial Court justice, no less, upheld the constitutionality of the Massachusetts parking appeals system, [ruling in 2011 that such a high court fee doesn't violate any fundamental right.](#) SJC justice Robert Cordy added that the high fee had the extra benefit of discouraging “non-meritorious appeals.” Cordy had it half-right: A \$275 fee discourages practically all appeals, meritorious and otherwise.

It is time for the Legislature to remedy the matter. [A bill sponsored by state Representative Byron Rushing](#) would send parking ticket appeals to small claims court while also limiting the filing fees and making them refundable should the appellant prevail. The motoring public will continue to be a lucrative revenue source for cities and towns. But when ticketing abuses occur, drivers deserve a reasonably affordable option to pursue justice beyond the initial appeal stage.