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The Legal Way To Beat That Parking Ticket

May 26, 2004

By Tracy Vedder

SEATTLE - At \$35 a crack, parking tickets can be a pain in the pocket. That's just the average in Seattle, some parking tickets run more than \$250.

But you can beat the ticket and it's all legal.

Plug in your dimes, your quarters, feed that meter and still there's a never-ending supply of expired meters. And parking enforcement officers willing to write them up.

"They get upset," says Officer Mary Mitchell, "but I just explain to people - today you gambled, I caught you."

Officer Mitchell has heard it all. "There was money jammed in the meter," says Michele Clarke-Mason.

Or, "I just stopped by to pick up a dozen doughnuts for some workers," says Amanda Dellinger in front of Top Pot Doughnuts downtown.

But the ticket still gets written. Visitor Carl Kirby complains, "\$35 for a parking ticket is a little ridiculous."

Until now, if you overstayed your welcome at any of Seattle's parking meters, you didn't have much choice but to simply pay the ticket or let the fine keep growing. But beginning Aug. 15, parkingticket.com comes to town. It's a new on-line service dedicated to helping you beat your parking ticket.

"Lambs going to slaughter," that's what ParkingTicket.com President Glen Bolofsky says about drivers who get parking tickets. He says cities like Seattle don't use parking tickets to maintain safe city streets. Bolofsky says those meters are a cash cow, and Seattle is milking those tickets for millions every year.

Seattle resident and ticket recipient Clarke-Mason agrees, "the city says it's for revenue but it's actually damaging the businesses downtown."

Here's how the service works: You sign onto Parkingticket.com, plug in your ticket information and pay the company half the price of the ticket. Ticket analyzers like Yu Ping Shu look for errors that could lead to a dismissal.



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"For example, the wrong make, the wrong body type of vehicle or the wrong plate type of vehicle, and that is dismissed right there," she said.

ParkingTicket.com writes a letter to the city protesting the ticket. If you lose, the company sends you a full refund, but you'll still have to pay for the ticket.

"The biggest problem with tickets," says Bolofsky, "is that people don't fight them. Because if they fight them, they'll have a great chance of getting it dismissed."

ParkingTicket.com boasts a 70 percent success rate, fighting about 150,000 tickets a year. Amanda Dellinger has racked up a lot of parking tickets living on Seattle's Capitol Hill. Would she use the service? "Oh my gosh yeah! And I'd tell everybody about it."

But parking enforcement officers are skeptical. As they say, you can't argue with an expired meter.

ParkingTicket.com currently operates in New York, Washington, D.C. and San Francisco. The company plans to expand to Seattle, Chicago and Los Angeles in August.

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