

GET MORE TEXANS ON THE ROAD AND OFF TO WORK:

End the Failure to Appear/Pay (FTAP) Program AKA OmniBase Program

Texas continues to break records for the total jobs created.⁴ Texas businesses are facing a difficult labor shortage, with certain sectors in Texas more heavily impacted, like the trucking and construction industries.⁵ More than 95% of Texans drive to work, including four out of five residents of San Antonio.⁶ Businesses need their employees to have reliable transportation to work, and a valid driver's license has been found to be a greater predictor of employment than a high school diploma.⁷

Under the Failure to Appear/Pay (FTAP) Program run by private contractor OmniBase Services of Texas, the San Antonio Municipal Court has almost 88,000 outstanding holds and Bexar County Justice of the Peace courts have nearly 90,000 holds, impacting tens of thousands of San Antonio/Bexar County residents. The current holds on licenses have an average length of five years since they were imposed.

These holds disproportionately impact low-income zip codes and people of color and are counterproductive to advancing city and county workforce and economic development goals. Debt-based license restrictions exacerbate statewide labor shortages and hinder economic growth.⁸

The link between a driver's license and employment

- Four out of five San Antonio residents drive to work.
- 52% of people lose their jobs when their licenses were suspended.¹
- 30% of all civilian jobs require driving as part of the job.²
- A valid driver's license has been found to be a greater predictor of employment than a high school diploma.³

The missing link between OmniBase and court compliance and revenues

- Statewide analyses by Texas Appleseed reveal there is no significant difference in the amount collected per criminal case between municipal courts using OmniBase and those that do not.
- On the contrary, data from more than 800 courts across Texas found the average collection rate per case for courts using OmniBase is **\$45.44 less** than courts not using the program.
- Harris County and the City of Austin saw revenue per criminal case **increase slightly after ceasing their OmniBase contracts.**

The OmniBase program claims to increase court appearance rates and revenues, but it has not been successful. What OmniBase has successfully done is keep thousands of would-be workers off the road due to invalid licenses.

This fall, let's pass a City Council resolution in San Antonio and a Commissioners court resolution in Bexar County to opt out of their contract with OmniBase and end the use of the Failure to Appear/Failure to Pay Program. Doing so would enable tens of thousands of residents in San Antonio and Bexar County to renew their driver's licenses and get back on the road. When you're free to drive, you're free to work!

This fall let's renew the driver's licenses of Texans, not the OmniBase contracts.



Endnotes & References

- ¹ Chicago Jobs Council (2018), Living in suspension: Consequences of driver's license suspension policies, Retrieved from https://static1.squarespace.com/static/63a0838721aff66b22dd2598/t/63a09851174d8e5a923e0675/1671469137600/Living-in-Suspension_Report-by-CJC.pdf.
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- ³ Pawasarat, J., & Quinn, L. M. (2017), *Research brief on ETI driver's license studies*, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Employment and Training Institute, Retrieved from https://www.google.com/url?q=https://dc.uwm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article%3D1185%26context%3DEti_pubs&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1717183351573480&usq=AOvVaw1T3oNdcrs_rHKFFboOUwHV.
- ⁴ Office of the Texas Governor (2024, Mar.), Texas leads nation with jobs surge in February, Retrieved from <https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/texas-leads-nation-with-jobs-surge-in-february#:~:text=Texas%20reaches%20a%20new%20high%20for%20total%20jobs%20at%202014%2C103%2C700,the%20most%20in%20the%20nation.>
- ⁵ Jodi Gonzalez (2022, Apr.), Drivers wanted: Texas trucking strives to stay on the move, Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, Retrieved from [https://comptroller.texas.gov/economy/fiscal-notes/archive/2022/apr/trucking.php#:~:text=Often%2C%20ATA%20is%20quoted%20for,the%20decade%2C%E2%80%9D%20he%20says; see also Cora Neas \(2023, Sept.\), National survey of contractors shows 'cultural shift in construction,' worker shortage, KXAN, Retrieved from https://www.kxan.com/news/national-news/national-survey-of-contractors-shows-cultural-shift-in-construction-worker-shortage/.](https://comptroller.texas.gov/economy/fiscal-notes/archive/2022/apr/trucking.php#:~:text=Often%2C%20ATA%20is%20quoted%20for,the%20decade%2C%E2%80%9D%20he%20says; see also Cora Neas (2023, Sept.), National survey of contractors shows 'cultural shift in construction,' worker shortage, KXAN, Retrieved from https://www.kxan.com/news/national-news/national-survey-of-contractors-shows-cultural-shift-in-construction-worker-shortage/)
- ⁶ US Census Bureau (n.d.), Commuters' characteristics and commuting time in Texas, US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2020 and 2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Retrieved from https://demographics.texas.gov/Visualizations/2022/Commuters/2022_CommutersGraphic.pdf; see also Iris Dimmick (2017, Dec.), Census data: Almost 80% of San Antonians Drive to Work Alone, San Antonio Report, Retrieved from [https://sanantonioreport.org/census-data-almost-80-of-san-antonians-drive-to-work-alone/.](https://sanantonioreport.org/census-data-almost-80-of-san-antonians-drive-to-work-alone/)
- ⁷ Pawasarat, J., & Quinn, L. M. (2017), *Research brief on ETI driver's license studies*, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Employment and Training Institute, Retrieved from https://dc.uwm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1185&context=eti_pubs.
- ⁸ Chien, C., George, A., Shekhar, S., & Apel, R. (2022), Estimating the Earnings Loss Associated with a Criminal Record and Suspended Driver's License, *Arizona Law Review*, 64, 675, Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.law.scu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1997&context=facpubs#:~:text=Analyzing%20the%20literature%2C%20we%20estimate,suspended%20license%20to%20be%20%2412%2C700.>