



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Ruth Hassell-Thompson

## Legislature Rejects Increases in Traffic Fines

RUTH HASSELL-THOMPSON March 26, 2013

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Proposed restrictions on plea bargaining traffic tickets and a proposed \$80 surcharge on certain parking tickets were rejected by the Legislature during budget negotiations. Governor Cuomo and the Legislature did, however, agree that fines for texting while driving and driving without a hands free device should be enhanced.

Governor Cuomo proposed significant restrictions on plea bargaining down speeding tickets where a motorist is driving 20 miles above the speed limit. The Senate and Assembly rejected that proposal. The Governor also proposed a surcharge of \$80 for VTL Article 32 Stopping, Standing and Parking Violations. The Senate and Assembly negotiated with the Governor and a deal was struck that limited the surcharge to \$25.

The Governor and Legislature did, however, agree to increase certain moving and equipment violations by \$8 and in an effort to reduce car accidents, the Governor and Legislature agreed that fines for texting and talking on the cell phone without a hands free set, would be enhanced. For the first offense, a minimum of \$50 and no more than \$150. For a second offense within 18 months -- a minimum fine of \$50 and no more than \$200. For a third offense within 18 months – a minimum fine of \$50 and no more than \$400. “During the budget negotiations, we resisted any effort to pass legislation which could result in “point violations” and increases in auto insurance. We were very successful in cutting the proposal to institute \$80 surcharges for certain traffic offenses. We thought that amount was excessive. In the end, the average motorist came out on top. Our votes to increase penalties for people who text while driving or fail to use hand free devices, is a message to reckless drivers. That message is don’t text and drive. Use a blue tooth! We can reduce fatalities, body and property injury if people obey the law,” Senator Hassell-Thompson concluded.