

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY - 2026 SESSION

CHAPTER 356

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 19.2-340, 19.2-341, 19.2-349, and 19.2-354 of the Code of Virginia, relating to fines and costs; period of limitations on collection.

[S 180]

Approved April 8, 2026

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 19.2-340, 19.2-341, 19.2-349, and 19.2-354 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 19.2-340. Fines; how recovered; in what name.

A. When any statute or ordinance prescribes a fine, unless it is otherwise expressly provided or would be inconsistent with the manifest intention of the General Assembly, it shall be paid to the Commonwealth if prescribed by a statute and recoverable by presentment, indictment, information, or warrant and paid to the locality if prescribed by an ordinance and recoverable by warrant. Whenever any warrant or summons is issued pursuant to § 19.2-72 or 19.2-74 for an offense in violation of any county, city, or town ordinance that is similar to any provision of this Code, and such warrant or summons references the offense using both the citation corresponding to the county, city, or town ordinance and the specific provision of this Code, any fine prescribed by the county, city, or town ordinance shall be paid to the locality. Fines imposed and costs taxed in a criminal or traffic prosecution, including a prosecution for a violation of an ordinance adopted pursuant to § 46.2-1220, for committing an offense shall constitute a judgment and, if not paid at the time they are imposed, execution may issue thereon in the same manner as upon any other monetary judgment, subject to the period of limitations provided by § 19.2-341.

B. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, upon the expiration of the period of limitations provided by § 19.2-341, no action shall be brought to collect the debt.

C. The period of limitations provided by § 19.2-341 shall apply regardless of the method of collection applicable pursuant to § 19.2-349 and shall not be extended or revived on account of a partial payment, a written or verbal affirmation of fines or costs, or a change in collection methods. Upon the expiration of the period of limitations, it shall not be revived or restarted by any means.

§ 19.2-341. Penalties other than fines; how recovered; in what name; limitation of actions.

A. When any statute or ordinance prescribes a monetary penalty other than a fine, unless it is otherwise expressly provided or would be inconsistent with the manifest intention of the General Assembly, it shall be paid to the Commonwealth if prescribed by a statute and paid to the locality if prescribed by an ordinance and recoverable by warrant, presentment, indictment, or information. Penalties imposed and costs taxed in any such proceeding shall constitute a judgment and, if not paid at the time they are imposed, execution may issue thereon in the same manner as upon any other monetary judgment. No such proceeding of any nature, however, shall be brought or had for the recovery of such a penalty or costs due the Commonwealth or any political subdivision thereof, unless within ~~60~~ 10 years from the date of the offense or delinquency giving rise to imposition of such penalty if imposed by a circuit court or within 30 years if imposed by a general district court judgment.

B. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, upon the expiration of the period of limitations provided by subsection A, no action shall be brought to collect the debt.

C. The period of limitations provided in subsection A shall apply regardless of the method of collection applicable pursuant to § 19.2-349 and shall not be extended or revived on account of a partial payment, a written or verbal affirmation of the debt, or a change in collection method. Upon the expiration of the period of limitations, it shall not be revived or restarted by any means.

§ 19.2-349. Responsibility for collections; clerks to report unsatisfied fines, etc.; duty of attorneys for Commonwealth; duties of Department of Taxation.

A. The clerk of the circuit court and district court of every county and city shall submit to the judge of his court, the Department of Taxation, the State Compensation Board and the attorney for the Commonwealth of his county or city a monthly report of all fines, costs, forfeitures and penalties which are delinquent more than ~~90~~ 180 days, including court-ordered restitution of a sum certain, imposed in his court for a violation of state law or a local ordinance which remain unsatisfied, including those which are delinquent in installment payments. The monthly report shall include the social security number or driver's license number of the defendant, if known, and such other information as the Department of Taxation and the Compensation Board deem appropriate. The Executive Secretary shall make the report required by this subsection on behalf of those clerks who participate in the Supreme Court's automated information system.

B. The clerk of the circuit court and district court of every county and city shall submit quarterly to the attorney for the Commonwealth of his county or city and any probation agency that serves such county or

city:

1. A list of all defendants with an outstanding balance of restitution ordered by the court served by such clerk. Such report shall include the defendant's name, case number, total amount of restitution ordered, amount of restitution remaining due, and last date of payment; and

2. A list of all accounts where more than ~~90~~ 180 days have passed since an account was sent to collections and no payments have been made toward fines, costs, forfeitures, penalties, or restitution. For accounts where restitution is owed, such report shall include the defendant's name, case number, and total amount of restitution and restitution interest due.

C. It shall be the duty of the attorney for the Commonwealth to cause proper proceedings to be instituted for the collection and satisfaction of all fines, costs, forfeitures, penalties and restitution. The attorney for the Commonwealth shall determine whether it would be impractical or uneconomical for such service to be rendered by the office of the attorney for the Commonwealth. If the defendant does not enter into an installment payment agreement under § 19.2-354, the attorney for the Commonwealth and the clerk may agree to a process by which collection activity may be commenced ~~90~~ 180 days after judgment. *Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no collection activity, including referral to a private collection agency, local treasurer, or the Department of Taxation, shall be commenced for any fines, costs, forfeitures, or penalties while a defendant is incarcerated for an active term of imprisonment and subject to a deferred payment agreement entered pursuant to subsection F of § 19.2-354.*

If the attorney for the Commonwealth does not undertake collection, he shall (i) contract with private attorneys or private collection agencies, (ii) enter into an agreement with a local governing body, (iii) enter into an agreement with the county or city treasurer, or (iv) use the services of the Department of Taxation, upon such terms and conditions as may be established by guidelines promulgated by the Office of the Attorney General, the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court with the Department of Taxation and the Compensation Board. At least 30 days prior to the execution of a contract pursuant to clause (i), the attorney for the Commonwealth shall consult with the clerk of the circuit court. Such consultation is not required when the attorney for the Commonwealth enters into an agreement pursuant to clause (ii), (iii), or (iv). If the attorney for the Commonwealth undertakes collection, he shall follow the procedures established by the Department of Taxation and the Compensation Board. Such guidelines shall not supersede contracts between attorneys for the Commonwealth and private attorneys and collection agencies when active collection efforts are being undertaken. As part of such contract, private attorneys or collection agencies shall be given access to the social security number of the defendant in order to assist in the collection effort. Any such private attorney shall be subject to the penalties and provisions of § 18.2-186.3.

The fees of any private attorneys or collection agencies shall be paid on a contingency fee basis out of the proceeds of the amounts collected. However, in no event shall such attorney or collection agency receive a fee for amounts collected by the Department of Taxation under the Setoff Debt Collection Act (§ 58.1-520 et seq.). A local treasurer undertaking collection pursuant to an agreement with the attorney for the Commonwealth may collect the administrative fee authorized by § 58.1-3958.

D. The Department of Taxation and the State Compensation Board shall be responsible for the collection of any judgment which remains unsatisfied or does not meet the conditions of § 19.2-354. Persons owing such unsatisfied judgments or failing to comply with installment payment agreements under § 19.2-354 shall be subject to the delinquent tax collection provisions of Title 58.1. The Department of Taxation and the State Compensation Board shall establish procedures to be followed by clerks of courts, attorneys for the Commonwealth, other state agencies and any private attorneys or collection agents and may employ private attorneys or collection agencies, or engage other state agencies to collect the judgment. The Department of Taxation and the Commonwealth shall be entitled to deduct a fee for services from amounts collected for violations of local ordinances.

The Department of Taxation and the State Compensation Board shall annually report to the Governor and the General Assembly the total of fines, costs, forfeitures and penalties assessed, collected, and unpaid and those which remain unsatisfied or do not meet the conditions of § 19.2-354 by each circuit and district court. The report shall include the procedures established by the Department of Taxation and the State Compensation Board pursuant to this section and a plan for increasing the collection of unpaid fines, costs, forfeitures and penalties. The Auditor of Public Accounts shall annually report to the Governor, the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court and the General Assembly as to the adherence of clerks of courts, attorneys for the Commonwealth and other state agencies to the procedures established by the Department of Taxation and the State Compensation Board.

The Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court shall annually report to the Governor, the General Assembly, the Chairmen of the House and Senate Committees for Courts of Justice, and the Virginia State Crime Commission on the total of restitution assessed, collected, and unpaid for each circuit and district court and the total of restitution collected and deposited into the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund pursuant to subsection I of § 19.2-305.1 by each circuit and district court.

E. The provisions of this section shall not apply to any orders of restitution docketed in the name of the victim or when it is ordered that an assignment of the judgment for restitution to the victim be docketed.

§ 19.2-354. Authority of court to order payment of fine, costs, forfeitures, penalties, or restitution in installments or upon other terms and conditions; community work in lieu of payment.

A. Any defendant convicted of a traffic infraction or a violation of any criminal law of the Commonwealth or of any political subdivision thereof, or found not innocent in the case of a juvenile, who is sentenced to pay a fine, restitution, forfeiture, or penalty may pay such fine, restitution, forfeiture, or penalty and any costs that the defendant may be required to pay in deferred payments or installments. The court assessing the fine, restitution, forfeiture, or penalty and costs shall authorize the clerk to establish and approve individual deferred or installment payment agreements. If the defendant owes court-ordered restitution and enters into a deferred or installment payment agreement, any moneys collected pursuant to such agreement shall be used first to satisfy such restitution order and any collection costs associated with restitution prior to being used to satisfy any other fine, forfeiture, penalty, or cost owed, unless an order for restitution is docketed in the name of the victim or it is ordered that an assignment of the judgment to the victim be docketed. Any payment agreement authorized under this section shall be consistent with the provisions of § 19.2-354.1. The requirements set forth in § 19.2-354.1 shall be posted in the clerk's office and on the court's website, if a website is available. As a condition of every such agreement, a defendant who enters into an installment or deferred payment agreement shall promptly inform the court of any change of mailing address during the term of the agreement. If the defendant is unable to make payment within 90 days of sentencing, the court may assess a one-time fee not to exceed \$10 to cover the costs of management of the defendant's account until such account is paid in full. This one-time fee shall not apply to cases in which costs are assessed pursuant to § 17.1-275.1, 17.1-275.2, 17.1-275.3, 17.1-275.4, 17.1-275.7, 17.1-275.8, or 17.1-275.9. Installment or deferred payment agreements shall include terms for payment if the defendant participates in a program as provided in subsection B or C. The court, if such sum or sums are not paid in full by the date ordered, shall proceed in accordance with § 19.2-358.

B. When a person sentenced to the Department of Corrections or a local correctional facility owes any fines, costs, forfeitures, restitution, or penalties, he shall be required as a condition of participating in any work release, home/electronic incarceration, or nonconsecutive days program as set forth in § 53.1-60, 53.1-131, 53.1-131.1, or 53.1-131.2 to either make full payment or make payments in accordance with his installment or deferred payment agreement while participating in such program. If, after the person has an installment or deferred payment agreement, the person fails to pay as ordered, his participation in the program may be terminated until all fines, costs, forfeitures, restitution, and penalties are satisfied. The Director of the Department of Corrections and any sheriff or other administrative head of any local correctional facility shall withhold such ordered payments from any amounts due to such person, *including amounts assessed but not yet due under a deferred payment agreement established pursuant to subsection F*. Distribution of the moneys collected shall be made in the following order of priority to:

1. Meet the obligation of any judicial or administrative order to provide support and such funds shall be disbursed according to the terms of such order;
2. Pay any restitution as ordered by the court;
3. Pay any fines or costs as ordered by the court;
4. Pay travel and other such expenses made necessary by his work release employment or participation in an education or rehabilitative program, including the sums specified in § 53.1-150; and
5. Defray the offender's keep.

The balance shall be credited to the offender's account or sent to his family in an amount the offender so chooses.

The State Board of Local and Regional Jails shall promulgate regulations governing the receipt of wages paid to persons sentenced to local correctional facilities participating in such programs, the withholding of payments, and the disbursement of appropriate funds. The Director of the Department of Corrections shall prescribe rules governing the receipt of wages paid to persons sentenced to state correctional facilities participating in such programs, the withholding of payments, and the disbursement of appropriate funds.

C. The court shall establish a program and may provide an option to any person upon whom a fine and costs have been imposed to discharge all or part of the fine or costs by earning credits for the performance of community service work (i) before or after imprisonment or (ii) in accordance with the provisions of § 19.2-316.4, 53.1-59, 53.1-60, 53.1-128, 53.1-129, or 53.1-131 during imprisonment. The program shall specify the rate at which credits are earned and provide for the manner of applying earned credits against the fine or costs. The court assessing the fine or costs against a person shall inform such person of the availability of earning credit toward discharge of the fine or costs through the performance of community service work under this program and provide such person with written notice of terms and conditions of this program. The court shall have such other authority as is reasonably necessary for or incidental to carrying out this program.

D. When the court has authorized deferred payment or installment payments, the clerk shall give notice to the defendant that upon his failure to pay as ordered he may be fined or imprisoned pursuant to § 19.2-358.

E. The failure of the defendant to enter into a deferred payment or installment payment agreement with the court or the failure of the defendant to make payments as ordered by the agreement shall allow the Tax Commissioner to act in accordance with § 19.2-349 to collect all fines, costs, forfeitures, and penalties.

F. For any defendant sentenced to an active term of incarceration and ordered to pay any fine, cost, forfeiture, or penalty related to the charge that such defendant is incarcerated for, or any other charge for which such defendant was sentenced on the same day, the court shall enter such defendant into a deferred payment agreement, as defined in § 19.2-354.1, for such fines, costs, forfeitures, or penalties. The due date for such deferred payment agreement shall be set no earlier than 180 days after the defendant's scheduled release from incarceration on the charges for which such defendant was sentenced on the same day. Notwithstanding any other provisions of law, the period of limitations provided by § 19.2-341 for payment of such fines, costs, forfeitures, or penalties shall start to run on the due date for such deferred payment agreement.

2. That the provisions of this act shall become effective on January 1, 2027.