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Washington man streams his anger -- but still must pay traffic ticket

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By Aimee Green, The Oregonian
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No one likes a speeding ticket.

But 47-year-old Michael Harold Lynch, of Bellevue, Wash., apparently took his anger to a new level when he emptied \$206 in small change into a plastic bag, soaking it in urine and mailing it to the payments division of the Multnomah County courthouse. Mailroom staff handed over the box - and the angry letter that accompanied it -- to a sheriff's sergeant.

"It was nasty. It reeked," said Sgt. Phil Anderchuk.

Anderchuk called a U.S. postal inspector to see if federal law had been broken, and learned that it's not against the law to mail a box of bodily fluids, as long as it's properly packed and doesn't emit an obnoxious odor. (Court staff could only smell the contents once they opened the package).

So the sergeant sealed up the box and mailed it back to Lynch -- with \$27.30 postage due if Lynch wanted his change back.

Lynch had been ticketed by Portland police Officer Chris Cass last October for driving 19 mph over the posted 35 mph speed limit in a construction zone along Southeast McLoughlin Boulevard near the Ross Island Bridge. Lynch apparently ignored the ticket and missed a court date in which he could have shown up to fight the ticket or argued his case to the judge in a letter. He racked up an extra \$65 in fees.

Then, the box showed up.

In explaining why the courthouse couldn't accept Lynch's payment, the sergeant wrote that "the pile of coins emitted a strong, pungent odor of stale urine. This was very concerning to me."

Anderchuk reminded Lynch he still owed for the ticket.

"I encourage you to submit your payment in a more traditional form," he wrote in a January letter. He told Lynch to expect a visit from a postal inspector, presumably to talk about how close he came to violating federal law.

Lynch apparently got the message, because a few weeks later a check arrived. But it was made out to the wrong agency. Courthouse staff sent it back. In February, a new check arrived, but this

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time it was made out for the wrong amount: \$206, which didn't account for \$65 in penalties for arriving late. Last week, the state turned Lynch's case over to a collection agency.

The Oregonian could not reach Lynch for comment.

But Lynch clearly has lost his fight.

Which goes to show, one court manager says, that there are better ways to express one's distaste for a speeding ticket. Such as writing a letter to the judge, since showing up in court would have involved a 175-mile drive for Lynch, said Eric Hall, who oversees the mailroom where ticketed drivers send their payments. Hall said receiving letters -- or even checks -- laced with obscenities is "a common daily occurrence."

Other drivers, who come in person, occasionally try to pay their fines with jars full of change. But that is time consuming for staff and forces longer waits for other ticket payers, so Hall's office limits the form of payment to no more than 25 pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters and half dollars.

"People do get really worked up," Hall said.

But, said Hall, a box full of coins and urine is a first in his years on the job.

-- Aimee Green; aimeegreen@news.oregonian.com

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Next time he should pay in pesos..that is what I am going to do for my state taxes..I just had my bank order them..As soon as I get them..I am going to go on a shopping spree at all the stores that have spanish along with english signs in their stores.When they refuse them..I am going to scream..FOUL..Then after having some fun..like that..I will send them onto the state in a certified letter, Just to make sure they arrived safely. Just a question to the Multnomth courthose ?? Is this a law that says that you can't pay in change.? or just your rules..Better get it straight. It might come back to bite you in the butt.

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