

**Pine Lake may charge protesters with felony  
Urging ticketed drivers to switch courts irks judge**

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The city of **Pine Lake** is now threatening felony charges against two protesters who have targeted the city's traffic ticket system. For several weeks, Darryl Dorton and Douglas Coffey have stood outside **Pine Lake** traffic court and advised motorists who have been ticketed in the 900-resident town that they can ask to switch their cases to DeKalb County State Court. The county, not the city, then collects the fine revenue. **Pine Lake** lost \$25,000 in fines in March because of such switches.

**Pine Lake** Municipal Court Judge Alan Mullinax issued an order March 29 saying the men could be in contempt of court and face misdemeanor charges of practicing law without a license. He set a hearing for today. But Mullinax canceled that hearing Tuesday, saying the city was considering charging the men with "barratry," which Georgia law describes as stirring up groundless actions, quarrels or improperly offering legal assistance.

The possibility of a new charge came on the same day an article appeared in The Atlanta Journal-Constitution highlighting the men's battle with the city. "The city now alleges that (the two men), on May 3, 1999, (were) outside municipal court engaging in activity substantially similar, if not identical, to what is already the subject of the show cause hearing," Mullinax wrote, adding the men have stopped traffic defendants "and offered to them unsolicited advice as to how they should plea and otherwise dispose of their case."

DeKalb District Attorney J. Tom Morgan said last week that "it's perfectly legal to tell people what their rights are." Dorton and Coffey said they will continue to advise people outside the **Pine Lake** court building. The city last year generated 72 percent of its \$1.2 million in revenue from traffic ticket fines, almost all of it from stops along the three-tenths of a mile of Rockbridge Road that runs through the city.

