

Deadbeat dads forfeit right to drive



AUGUSTA, Maine (AP) — Not one can say he wasn't warned.

Maine made good Monday on repeated threats to yank the driver's licenses of parents who refuse to pay overdue child support, revoking driving privileges for eight fathers who together owe their kids more than \$140,000.

A ninth man who was to lose his license quickly made arrangements to pay the \$11,410 he owed, said Human Services Commissioner Jane Sheehan.

More licenses will be lifted, some as early as the end of this week.

Since the Legislature authorized the Family Financial Responsibility Act a year ago, the department has sent notices to roughly 20,000 parents who are at least 90 days behind in child support.

The threat has yielded the state \$11.5 million in back payments, said Sheehan.

"We have had people come in and give us as much as \$19,000" since the warnings first went out, said Sheehan.

Gov. John R. McKernan proposed the pinch on delinquent parents when he realized Maine was paying millions in state aid to families made destitute by the parents' failure to pay support. These so-called "deadbeat dads" — fathers in 97 percent of the cases, mothers in 3 percent — were walking out on \$150 million in support payments every year.

Besides driver's licenses, the state can also lift the licenses of doctors, lawyers, architects, plumbers, electricians, commercial fishermen and other professionals who fail to pay child

support.

There's no priority for lifting either kind of license, said Peter Gore, a spokesman for Human Services.

"If someone has a driver's and professional license," he said, "we'll go after both of them."

The licenses were targeted because the state had no other way of penalizing many of the delinquent parents, who are not enrolled in public assistance programs and frequently have no jobs on which they report income to the state, Gore said.

Maine's stringent steps to collect the money attracted the attention of President Clinton. The \$9.3 billion welfare reform proposal he sent to Congress last week includes a requirement that all states take similar action against parents with mounting child support debts.

In Maine, however, one licensing territory is sacrosanct: The state cannot strip its outdoors-loving residents of their hunting or fishing licenses.

Sheehan stressed that the program is designed not to punish parents but to get delinquent fathers and mothers to contact the state, acknowledge their debts and make arrangements to start paying them off.

But some of those affected say it's misguided.

"For educated, intellectual folks, they're going about this all wrong," said Alice Kennard. Her husband, Reynold, a truck driver, is one of the eight men whose licenses were revoked. "When they pull his license, his job goes with it," she said.

Reynold Kennard, who lives in the north-

ern Maine town of Fort Fairfield, said he won't pay child support without his license.

"If they ... think they're going to get \$84 a week, they're not," he said.

Reynold Kennard, according to the state, owes \$4,843 in support payments for children from a previous marriage. He and five of the seven others lose driving privileges July 7; two lost their licenses Monday.

But Sheehan said the action should not surprise anyone.

"We've been warning people since last August this day would come, and now it's here," she said.

Sheehan said each of the eight men had received two earlier letters telling them their licenses were in jeopardy because of child-support debts that ranged from \$4,843 to \$38,065.

If they had contacted the state to work out a payment schedule, Human Services would have ordered their licenses reinstated, she said.

An initial mailing went out last August to 17,400 parents who were behind in child support payments. In November, second notices went out to the same group, thanking those who had paid and reminding the rest that time was running out to start paying or stop driving.

This spring, an additional 2,000 deadbeat parents were identified.

Final notices went out last month to 144 parents who still refused to pay up.

As of mid-June, 90 of them had agreed to pay. Nine others were exempted because they are receiving some form of state assistance. Three parents requested hearings.

Simpson's attorneys ask to see evidence

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Defense lawyers demanded access Monday to blood samples and gloves in the murder case against O.J. Simpson and said they may present their own evidence and call witnesses at a preliminary hearing.

Lawyer Robert Shapiro asked the court for immediate access to blood samples, Simpson's white Ford Bronco, a ski cap or mask found near the two victims, and gloves found at the crime scene and at Simpson's Brentwood estate. The prosecution said last week that there was no ski mask.

"The evidence has not been made available to the defense for examination and photographing," Shapiro said. "Nor have the blood samples been made available for the defense to conduct

independent DNA testing."

The defense motion will be heard Tuesday morning with Simpson present.

Simpson has pleaded innocent to charges he murdered his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend Ronald Goldman on June 12. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for Thursday.

Shapiro suggested that every witness likely to testify at the trial might be called at the preliminary hearing in an effort to prove there is insufficient reason for a jury to consider the case against Simpson.

The tactic would turn the procedure into a mini-trial. The preliminary hearing normally is a brief proceeding in which only the prosecution presents a bare-bones version of its case to justify a trial.

Clinton seeks to delay sexual harassment suit

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — President Clinton will ask a federal judge to delay the Paula Jones sexual harassment case until after he leaves office, according to court papers filed Monday.

His lawyer's motion also asks the U.S. District Court in Little Rock to allow Clinton to delay the normally required response to the allegations until courts have decided whether a president can be sued.

Clinton will file a motion by Aug. 5 arguing that presidents are immune while in office from having to deal with private lawsuits, attorney Robert Bennett said in the court papers. Responding to allegations and other matters involved in litigation would harm the nation by distracting the president from his public duties, Bennett said.

Aug. 5 is the deadline that Judge Susan Webber Wright has given Clinton for filing a response. She said she would decide before then whether other issues may be set aside until the courts rule on the immunity question.

Bennett's filing cites a 1982 U.S. Supreme Court opinion related to former President Nixon, which found that presidents are immune from being sued for official actions taken while they are in office. It is not clear whether presidents can be sued for earlier actions.

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