

N.Y.P.D. Ticket-Fixing Scandal

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Over the years, the practice of fixing traffic tickets has persisted in New York despite many headlines, court cases and the wrecked careers of law enforcement officers.

In 2011, the practice became the focus [of a major multiprecinct investigation](#), the largest focused on ticket-fixing since the 1950s. Hundreds of officers could be disciplined by the time a grand jury in the Bronx finishes its work, including roughly two dozen officers who could face criminal charges, officials and others briefed on the case have said. The inquiry began when the Police Department's Internal Affairs Bureau, in an unrelated investigation, taped an officer in mid-2009 trying to have a ticket fixed.

The scheme [centers on union delegates](#) and trustees. Officers wanting to make a ticket disappear — or following orders to do so — would seek out union officials who seemed plugged into a network for doing it safely.

[Though the investigation has not been formally announced and has not resulted in any arrests](#), its reach has already begun to extend to Bronx trial courtrooms. It rolled into an attempted murder case in late May, and the following week touched drunken driving.

Any police officer swept up in the scandal — and the number is thought to be as high as 300 — is susceptible to being asked about the topic when showing up as a witness in unrelated cases. And if jurors cease to believe the words of police officers because they monkeyed with tickets, something many defense lawyers may hope occurs, then it is in these courtrooms that the most corrosive impact of the scandal may be felt.

Background

Ticket fixing has been around since police officers walked their beats. In 1951, officers in Manhattan's 20th Precinct were investigated for sabotaging paperwork to kill traffic citations, as favors for politicians. In the middle of the inquiry, the ledger recording all the precinct's summonses mysteriously disappeared.