

NYC federal jury says cabbies entitled to back pay over former TLC suspension policy

By [EVAN SIMKO-BEDNARSKI](#) | November 16, 2023

After years of legal wrangling, ten drivers who were suspended by the city Taxi and Limousine Commission after an arrest were awarded thousands of dollars in back pay Thursday by a jury in Manhattan Federal Court.

The victory paves the way for as many as 8,300 additional drivers — [part of a class action suit that's wended its way through the federal court system since 2009](#) — to potentially receive lost wages from the city.

All the drivers had their TLC licenses revoked immediately after an arrest, prior to any trial — part of a commission policy that left them unable to work while their case was pending.

“Most New Yorkers are fair people. They would think that someone should be allowed to be innocent until proven guilty,” Khairul Amin, a taxi driver affected by the policy but not one of the ten awarded damages in Thursday’s verdict, told the Daily News in 2014.

“But that’s not how the TLC works,” he said at the time. “They just assume you’re guilty.”

Amin’s charges were ultimately dismissed.

A [federal appeals court ruled in 2019](#) that the TLC’s post-suspension hearings offered no real possibility of appeal — it noted that in every instance the court reviewed, the TLC failed to lift a suspension.

The TLC changed its policy in 2020. Thursday’s jury verdict is the first step to making whole the thousands of drivers affected by the former policy.

The ten drivers — randomly selected by the court — served as a “test trial” for the damages phase.

The jury awarded a total of \$189,500 in back pay and emotional damages to the drivers, according to court documents. The awards varied from driver to driver, ranging from \$4,500 to \$42,500.

*“The sham hearings, which practically meant drivers were doled out a punishment before even being found guilty, always felt so wrong,” said B’hairavi Desai, head of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, a plaintiff in the suit.

“Today’s jury verdict just proves that ordinary New Yorkers understand that the insult lead to injury,” she added*

The ruling effectively means that the court has found all 8,300 drivers who have filed damage claims to be eligible, Shannon Liss-Riordan an attorney for the drivers, told the Daily News.

*Liss-Riordan said she and NYTWA leadership would be calling on the city to settle with those remaining drivers.

“We shouldn’t have to have 800 of these trials,” she said.*