

Bench Warrant

An arrest warrant issued by a judge when a person violates the rules of the court, most often for Failure to Appear.

Contempt of Court

A charge issued for not complying with court orders. For example, this can be issued along with Failure to Appear charges or, in some cases, if a judge deems a person is willfully not paying their LFOs. A Contempt of Court charge often involves jail time and/or additional fines.

Debtors' Prison

The historical practice of jailing those with outstanding debts as a means of payment. Debtors' prisons were officially abolished by federal law in 1833 and affirmed as unconstitutional in 1983.

Failure to Appear

A charge issued when a person does not show up for a scheduled courtroom proceeding. A Failure to Appear charge can lead to other charges like Contempt of Court, and/or to additional penalties including jail time or fines.

Fees

Costs added to the initial fine to fund other court or government expenditures such as jail booking fees, bail investigation fees, public defender application fees, indigent application fees, and payments to the jail for the cost of pretrial detention. In some cases, fees cover other tangentially related expenditures such as employee fitness centers.

Fines

The initial cost of an infraction, such as a \$100 fine for a traffic violation.

Legal Financial Obligation

The total debts owed to a federal, state or local court as the result of an infraction or crime. LFOs include the original amount owed, as well as any surcharges, accumulated interest and penalties. Note that the definition in this report may differ slightly from that of some state and local governments.

Pay-or-Stay

The practice of serving time in jail to offset unpaid LFOs.

Pay-to-Stay

Fees charged to inmates for room-and-board or other necessities, such as laundry services or feminine hygiene products.

Restitution

Money paid to victims for personal or property damage.

Willful Nonpayment

When a person chooses not to pay their LFOs despite an ability to do so. In most states, deciding whether nonpayment is willful is up to an individual judge's discretion.