

The cost of injustice is high

By Heather H. Hall, Director of the Louisiana Justice Coalition

Re: "Judge sued over fines," March 9.

Taxpayers aren't often the first in line to complain about Louisiana's broken justice system, but they should be. For decades, the broken system has been siphoning money away from other pressing state needs.

The latest example is Orleans Parish, where taxpayers are footing the bill to jail people who are too poor to pay their fines. In some cases, the cost to taxpayers is exponentially more than the fine itself.

Across the state in Calcasieu Parish, taxpayers have paid to house defendants for up to four years before trial because of delays caused by extreme caseloads and lack of resources in the public defender system.

Wasting tax dollars is an outrage anywhere in the country, but in post-Katrina Louisiana it's criminal.

In less than two months, the Legislature will have another chance to reform the justice system so that it operates efficiently and effectively.

Let's hope they finally get it right.