

Pine Lake: Lawmakers demand study of police harassing drivers

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Three state lawmakers Wednesday called for an investigation of the city of **Pine Lake**, saying they've received "an alarming number" of complaints from motorists about police harassment. **Pine Lake**, a DeKalb County town of 900 just west of Stone Mountain that long has had a reputation as a speed trap, maintains a nine-officer police force. Police last year generated 72 percent of the city's \$1.2 million revenue from tickets, most of them issued on a short stretch of Rockbridge Road that runs through the city. "There seems to be an exorbitant amount of court fees," said state Rep. Vernon Jones (D-Decatur), who was joined by state Sen. Gloria Butler (D-Clarkston) and state Rep. Michelle Henson (D-Stone Mountain) at a Capitol news conference. "We don't want to see **Pine Lake** raise revenue on the backs of motorists," he said. **Pine Lake** Mayor Alfred Fowler said in a written statement the "Police Department will continue to conduct its actions consistent with the highest standards of its profession, enforcing the law in a manner that is fair and colorblind."

Pine Lake was founded in 1937 as a resort community where Atlantans could enjoy nature on the banks of a man-made 12-acre lake. Two years ago, in an effort to dispel its image as a speed trap, **Pine Lake** voluntarily gave up using radar to clock speeders. However, Jones says police aggressively stop cars with dealer tags or malfunctioning tail lights as a pretext to look for other offenses. Henson said she has talked to state law enforcement officials and will request DeKalb District Attorney J. Tom Morgan to initiate a probe by the GBI. Morgan said Henson has not yet talked to him about **Pine Lake** and he could not comment on whether he would request a probe. About 15 people with complaints about **Pine Lake**, all but one of whom are black, stood with lawmakers at the news conference. Jones said, "The perception is certain motorists are being stopped," although he stopped short of saying black motorists are targeted. He said an investigation should determine that.

"They are not a city; they're literally a subdivision with a police force," said Douglas Coffey, a DeKalb resident who has formed a group to represent citizens with complaints about **Pine Lake**. Map **Pine lake 0325.eps**: Map shows location of **Pine Lake**. Inset map shows **Pine Lake's** relation to metro Atlanta. / Staff