

**“My lawyer can get me off on a technicality.”**

**REALITY:** Lawyers don't have magic wands. The notion of getting off on what's called a technicality is the stuff TV shows are made of.

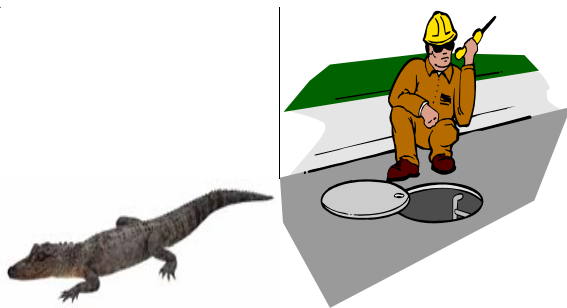
**“I don't need a lawyer. I can find out all I need to know on the internet.”**

**REALITY:** You can get access to statutes and legal research on the internet. However, knowing how to use them is something else again.



The practice of law is surprisingly regional, which is why going it alone or even bringing a lawyer from “the big city” to a place like Champaign-Urbana can be very risky indeed.

Most of the rest of what you find on the internet in the way of “how to beat your speeding ticket” and that ilk is pure entertainment. Forget about it!



### Resources:

Tenant Union 333-0112  
<http://www.tenantunion.uiuc.edu>

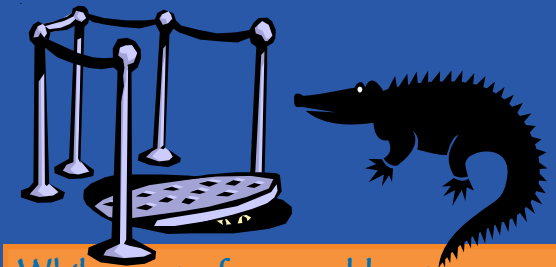
Student Legal Service 333-9053  
<http://www.odos.uiuc.edu/sls>

Champaign County Circuit Clerk  
Traffic: 384-3717  
Criminal: 384-3727  
<http://www.cccircuitclerk.com>

## STUDENT LEGAL SERVICE

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

# CAMPUS URBAN LEGENDS



**THIS PAMPHLET DOES NOT  
CONSTITUTE LEGAL ADVICE.**

**STUDENTS WHO ARE CONFRONTED  
WITH LEGAL PROBLEMS OR WHO  
NEED SPECIFIC ADVICE ARE EN-  
COURAGED TO SEEK ASSISTANCE  
FROM A LICENSED ATTORNEY AT  
STUDENT LEGAL SERVICE.**

While most of us would not prepare for court or do legal research by watching “Judge Judy” or “All My Children”, many still rely on the wealth of rumor and misinformation that constitutes Urban Legends.

In the hope of discouraging this practice, here are some of the most common of them.

### STUDENT LEGAL SERVICE

324 Illini Union  
1401 West Green St.  
Urbana, IL 61801  
333-9053

Office Hours: 8:30-Noon & 1-4:30pm, M-F  
<http://www.odos.uiuc.edu/sls>

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## LANDLORD-TENANT URBAN LEGENDS

**“If I want to get out the lease I just signed, I have 72 hours to cancel it.”**

**REALITY:** Once you have signed a lease, you don't even have 72 seconds to “cancel it” – it is a legally binding document the moment you sign it.

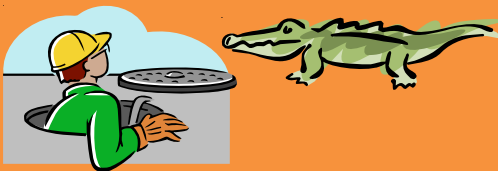


**“I'll just skip the last month's rent and let my security deposit cover it.”**

**REALITY:** Not only is this contrary to Illinois law, it is asking for an eviction, which only runs up the tab, with court costs and possibly your landlord's attorneys' fees coming your way.

**“If my landlord doesn't (pick any of these & more) : make repairs, provide me with furniture, call before he comes over, clean my carpets, etc., I can just withhold my rent.”**

**REALITY:** In Illinois, there is no such legal excuse for not paying rent, regardless of the landlord's conduct. Again, it's an invitation to an eviction proceeding.



## TRAFFIC URBAN LEGENDS

**“I was just going with the flow of traffic.”**

**REALITY:** If you're speeding, you're speeding, regardless of what the rest of the traffic is doing.

**“The cop made a mistake on my ticket.”**

**REALITY:** If the ticket says your car is a red Pontiac and it's really a Chevy, this will not invalidate the citation. That kind of error can always be correct; it is not a loophole.

**“I didn't sign the ticket.”**

**REALITY:** So what?

**“I didn't know that: my driver's license was suspended / I was speeding / I couldn't turn right on a red / etc.”**

**REALITY:** Almost every traffic violation in Illinois is one of absolute liability. What you knew, intended, or believed, is completely irrelevant.

**“I'll get out of this because the cop won't show up in court.”**

**REALITY:** In Champaign County, Illinois, the court date written on your ticket is not a trial date.

Once a trial date is set, the cops get notice and they always show up.



## CRIMINAL URBAN LEGENDS

**“If I cooperate with the authorities and inform on my drug dealer or fake ID manufacturer, they'll not press charges against me, or at least will cut me some slack.”**



**REALITY:** Police are allowed to do lots of

things to encourage you to assist them in their work, including incriminating yourself and possibly putting yourself in danger. Don't believe it!



**“But it was self-defense; he hit me first.”**

**REALITY:** Self-defense only works when it is an appropriate response. Punching someone's lights out after they shove you out of their way at the local tavern is not self-defense. It is a battery.

**“They didn't read me my rights.”**

**REALITY:** The police do not have to give you your Miranda warnings unless (a) you're in custody and (b) they start to question you.

## LEGAL REPRESENTATION URBAN LEGENDS

**“I don't want the Public Defender – I want a real lawyer.”**

**REALITY:** At least in Champaign County, the representation offered by the office of the Public Defender is high quality. You can easily pay for worse.



More legends debunked on back 

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