



DC cracks down on homeless encampments

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COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE

MONDAY, AUGUST 18, 2025 | COLUMBIATRIBUNE.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK



Every state has its own transportation agency that handles driver's licensing, so standardizing laws for new drivers isn't as easy as it sounds – even if some safety advocates find the inconsistency alarming. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Many states enact tougher requirements for new drivers

Terry Collins
USA TODAY

A new wave of state laws is enforcing stricter requirements for new drivers, but states still can't agree on how much practice is needed. • While most states have some form of graduated driver's licensing laws, ranging from as low as 20 and as high as 70 supervised hours, more states are looking into adopting tougher mandates for young people, said Jonathan Adkins, CEO of the Governors Highway Safety Association, a Washington, DC-based nonprofit.

Florida, Washington and New Jersey tightened up requirements for new drivers in 2025, but even these new laws have inconsistent requirements. The new laws come as some traffic safety advocates say the United States would benefit from more uniform laws on the topic. "There should be a national law for teen drivers," said Cheryl Giles, the longtime owner of Lakeland Atlantic Driving School in Winter Haven, Florida, which conducts about 1,000 student driving tests annually. "We desperately need some consistency." Meanwhile, motor vehicle crashes continue to be among the leading causes of death for teens in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Teen drivers also face a disproportionately higher risk of crashes in comparison with older drivers, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports.

"I would call it an epidemic right now, and we all

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"Whether you are in Virginia, Florida, Utah or even in the most rural parts of the country, the roads can be very dangerous places, especially when you don't fully understand the dangers of driving."

Tammy Gweedo McGee
Safe driving advocate

Council to mull rates at meeting

Water to be voted on, electric to be discussed

Charles Dunlap
Columbia Daily Tribune
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Columbia City Council is now fully into its 2026 budget season and with that will welcome a new member. After winning the Aug. 5 special election, Vera Elwood will take the oath of office to kick off Monday's meeting, Aug. 18, which will include a decision on increasing the city's water rate and a look toward increasing the city electric rate. Other public hearings will set the city's property tax rate for 2025. Based on state auditor calculations, the 2025 rate is \$0.3907 per \$100 assessed valuation, which actually is less than 2024, when the rate was \$0.4075. The maximum the city could set its property tax rate is \$0.4125. The 2025 rate will generate about \$11 million for the 2026 city budget.

The council will hold its first 2026 budget public hearing, which will include budget requests the Human Services Commission, Commission on Cultural Affairs, Housing and Community Development Commission, Convention and Visitors Advisory Board, and Columbia Sports Commission and the Climate and Environment Commission. These commissions are council advisory committees overseeing various city department operations.

A good chunk of Monday's meeting, though, likely will be dedicated to discussion and vote on the water rate and discussion of the electric rate.

The council at its previous meeting took public comment on the water rate proposal, and is welcoming more Monday. The water rate is not as complex as adjustments to electric rates.

The electric utility is seeking a 2% rate increase, which translates to \$2.8 revenue increase, per a staff memo the council.

For residential customers, this means generally that the base rate is expected to increase from \$22 per month to \$22.44 if approved without any amendments. The city breaks out its usage fees to summer and non-summer months.

Summer month usage proposal is:
• First 300 kWh — from 8.89 cents per kWh to 9.07 cents per kWh;
• Next 450 kWh — from 10.89 cents per kWh to 11.11 cents per kWh;

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Two people arrested in connection with 2017 homicide

Charles Dunlap
Columbia Daily Tribune
USA TODAY NETWORK

Columbia police this week made two arrests in connection with a 2017 homicide. David Adams, 44, and Julius Cureton, 37, both of Columbia, were arrested Thursday, Aug. 14, on suspicion of second-degree murder, first-degree robbery, first-degree burglary, armed criminal action, unlawful use of a weapon, and unlawful possession of a weapon, related to

the death of Augustus Roberts, of Columbia. Further online court information was not immediately available Friday morning, Aug. 15. Adams was arrested in the 3000 block of Paris Road, while Cureton was arrested in the area of Rolling Hills Road and Pride Mountain Drive, the police department said. Police responded 3:37 a.m. Dec. 11, 2017, to a report of a suspicious person in the 1900 block of Lasso Circle, off Boone County Route WW and East Old Haw-

thorne Drive. Police found Roberts unconscious and not breathing upon arrival, rendering aid until a medical team arrived and pronounced him dead. Adams and Cureton are accused of forcing entry into Roberts' home and assaulting him and a female resident, who received minor injuries. Investigators believe the home invasion was drug-related, and the home was targeted by the suspects, the department said. In previous updates police had asked Old Hawthorne neighbors to submit any home security video or any information

of suspicious vehicles or persons in the area prior to or after the alleged homicide. The department considers this case to still be under investigation and asks the public to provide any information related to this incident by calling the department at 573-874-7652 or CrimeStoppers at 573-875-8477 to remain anonymous. Residents also can submit an online CrimeStoppers tip by visiting <http://www.p3tips.com/899>. Information provided to CrimeStoppers that leads to an arrest may be eligible for an up to \$2,500 cash reward.

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Volume 124 | No. 334
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