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COVER
 Summer Driving

Challenge Grant Goal Surpassed

by James J. Baxter, President, NMA

It is my extreme pleasure to announce that as of June 18th the *NMA Foundation* has received \$61,000 in individual donations, more than enough to claim the entire \$50,000 matching grant offered by a dedicated Life member of the *National Motorists Association*.

Our effort got off to a bit of a slow start, but momentum began to build with the special mailing to NMA members and *NMA Foundation* contributors.

We're looking at a wide variety of projects in which to invest this

money. However, if you have what you think would be a great project for the *NMA Foundation* to pursue, let us hear from you. At this point, nothing is cast in concrete and we have adequate flexibility to consider a full range of suggestions.

Most importantly, I want to thank each and every person who contributed and helped us achieve this goal. We will do our utmost to insure that your money and your confidence are properly and effectively used to protect and enhance your freedom, pleasure and enjoyment as a driver, traveler and motoring enthusiast. ☺

Montana Fatalities Double

The NMA recently received a special report from the Montana Department of Transportation on highway accidents and fatalities. Chad Dornsife, NMA Nevada Activist, has created a web page that compares Montana's last 12 months *WITHOUT* a speed limit to their first full year of experience *WITH* a speed limit.

The new information shows that fatalities have more than doubled on rural interstates and have also increased on rural primary highways. This information contradicts the state officials who claimed speed limits, higher fines, and more enforcement would lower traffic deaths.

Chad's information was sent to various media outlets. The story

made a big enough stir in Montana that it was on the front page of several of the state's newspapers. And, Chad's report garnered enough attention that the Head of the Montana Department of Transportation actually sent a rebuttal to various media, legislative members of Montana, and DOT personnel.

Chad is still working on this issue in Montana. He hopes to be able to use this data to return the state to its glory days of a "reasonable and prudent" speed limit.

You can find Chad's study at http://www.hwysafety.com/hwy_montana_2001.htm You can also contact him at chad@hwy_safety.com or 775/721-2423 (cell phone). ☺

Keep "NMAF NEWS" coming...

Please notify the NMA when you have an address change. The Post Office will not always send it to us (even if you've placed a "change of address" with them).

All In The Timing

by Eric Skrum, Executive Editor

In studies, reports, surveys, and the news, ticket cameras have received quite a bit of attention lately. What seems to be driving the new interest? It's the timing of amber (or yellow) lights in intersections with cameras.

Last May, House Majority Leader Dick Armey released his report *The Red Light Running Crisis: Is It Intentional?*. This report states that many intersections with cameras have a lower amber light time than intersections without them. Representative Armey suggests that this is the real problem with these intersections. His contention is that over the past twenty years, the traffic light timing standards have changed.

Representative Armey shows the year that traffic safety regulations dropped the requirement to fix signal timing and instead began to instruct engineers to "use enforcement." This was the year that red light cameras first started collecting millions in revenue.

The conclusion that Representative Armey has come to is that these cameras are nothing more than a revenue tool, and that the intersection violations are more effectively corrected by lengthening the time of the amber light or by employing other proven traffic engineering strategies.

The amber timing of traffic lights is one issue the NMA has been investigating for some time. NMA data supports the same conclusions that Representative Armey has arrived at.

The positive effects of lengthening the time of the amber light have recently been proven in Mesa, Arizona. The city was asked by Lockheed Martin (the manufacturers supplying their ticket cameras) to take down several of their cameras. The reason? Not

enough red light runners. The company was expecting to catch 18 violators a day, but in some instances is now only finding one. Why? The city had recently lengthened its amber lights by a second.

In California, the *Red Light Camera Defense Team* has been working against these ticket cameras. Their primary defense has been using the data on the amber timing of intersections. Recently, a judge ordered Lockheed Martin to hand over documents concerning

Any city, company, or organization promoting ticket cameras for red light violations is knowingly trading traffic safety for ticket revenue.

red light cameras in San Diego. Attorney Colleen Cusack from the Defense Team claims that the confidential documents prove that the city and Lockheed Martin know that extending the duration of a yellow light significantly reduces the amount of red light violations. Many of the documents state that several intersections were considered for lights, but were rejected because the yellow lights were too long.

Interestingly, the contract that Lockheed Martin has with San Diego states that the city cannot change the amber time of intersections with cameras. If a city engineer indicates that the amber light should be increased for safety, legally he cannot do it, because of the contract.

As a side note, San Diego has been having many problems with their cameras. The police recently discovered that Lockheed Martin had moved the underground sensor loops at three intersections. The

move was done without authorization or knowledge from city officials. Now, San Diego has decided to shut down all 19 cameras while they launch an independent investigation.

As you follow the ticket camera issue in the next few months, you will see the debates become more heated as the information on amber timing comes more to the attention of the public. The proponents of this issue will deny the importance of amber timing, but it is one whose time has definitely come. And, the media is becoming less inclined to automatically embrace the idea of ticket cameras, due in part to exposure to data from the NMA and Representative Armey. More negative editorials and stories are showing up across the country.

And, here's the bottom line: properly engineered and timed traffic signals experience so few violations that ticket cameras become prohibitively expensive and totally unnecessary. Any city, company, or organization promoting ticket cameras for red light violations is knowingly trading traffic safety for ticket revenue. So, let's skip all the self-righteous excuses and pontification for ticket cameras. They have two purposes, generating ticket revenue and insurance premium surcharges.

For more information on ticket cameras, visit <http://www.motorists.org/issues/enforce/index.html>. You can also find House Majority Leader Dick Armey's report at <http://www.freedom.gov/auto/rlcreport.asp> And, you can order the 96 page report prepared by Greg Mauz, NMA Florida Activist, *Camera Enforcement—Developing the Factual Picture*. You can contact Greg for copies of this report at 561/243-0920. ☎

Making A Difference

By Ivan Sever, Massachusetts State Chapter Coordinator

Most people driving into Boston have seen those yellow 15 mph speed limit signs carrying a Fleet Bank logo at electronic toll booths on Massachusetts Turnpike.

But only Neil Licht, an NMA member, decided to do something about them. After being tagged with a \$50 speeding ticket, Neil headed for court.

"I used the signing standards of the federal *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD) and the state's Driver Training Manual, along with pictures that I took to make my case," says Neil. "The pictures showed several different and confusing signs

and color schemes at different exits, plus the lack of any advance or adequate warning requiring a slow-down to 15 mph."

Although the court's magistrate happened to agree with him, that

But only Neil Licht, an NMA member, decided to do something about them...

wasn't the end of the case.

"My win in the lower court was appealed by the prosecuting cop, but I won the second hearing in front of a judge anyway," Neil said. "Funny thing

is, the appeal was signed by a chief clerk magistrate that had been dead for at least 9 months."

No one noticed except for a Boston Herald columnist who published Neil's story on April 25, 2001.

About the dead man's signature, a Waltham District Court clerk said, "The state hasn't gotten around to updating it yet."

But what happened to those confusing signs? The Massachusetts Turnpike Authority started changing them the day after Neil's story appeared in the paper.

More evidence that one person can buck the system and win. 🙌

You Have Nothing To Be Afraid Of

By Ivan Sever, Massachusetts State Chapter Coordinator

So where did you stay last night, folks?" says the police officer with a hand on his gun.

I knew coming back to Communist Czechoslovakia after ten years would be emotional. But now that I am an American citizen, I have nothing to fear, I keep telling myself. But maybe that's exactly why I should be worried...

Three other officers were circling the car, suspiciously eyeing the bathing suits drying on the back seat. I remember those summers a long time ago, driving to Rumania with my parents, when I was a teenager. My father had always said, "Now kids, don't be afraid. We've already gone through border crossings with barbed wires, dogs, and mirrors for checking under the car. Remember kids, we've done nothing wrong. We're just on vacation."

But here and now, this was just a road side checkpoint, 'punct de control.' Still, seeing all the armed men, the cars, the lights, that show of

force, was a little unnerving.

"I said license and registration, please," says the officer.

I snap out of my flashback. I hand over my American passport and the German registration of my rented BMW. The Czech policeman disappears into the little guardhouse on the side of the road.

"Maybe I shouldn't have done that," I think to myself. "But I've done nothing wrong. I'm just on vacation," I keep saying to myself.

"I said where did you stay last night?" repeats the officer a little more impatiently.

The guardhouse door with the Communist flag is not opening and the three officers are still circling the car, fingering their guns. I shouldn't have stopped...

"Honey, what was the name of that town, back there," says my wife.

"What?"

"Sir, this is just a routine safety check point," says the State Trooper.

"Come on, honey, snap out of it.

What was that town...was it Arlington? No wait, was it Bennington?" She sounds a little edgy.

"Bennington," I repeat mechanically.

"OK. Have a nice day, folks," answers the State Trooper. "Sir, you have no reason to be afraid."

"Yes I do," I reply as I drive off slowly into a gorgeous New England spring day. "I certainly do." 🙌

Visit one of the NMA web sites for more motorist information.

www.motorists.org

www.speedtrap.org

www.roadblock.org

Libertarians Claim Criminal Outrage

If you were stopped at a roadblock or ticketed for not wearing a seatbelt this past Memorial Day weekend, you weren't alone: Millions of Americans were inconvenienced by what the Libertarian Party says was the "largest highway harassment campaign" in U.S. history.

"It is an outrage that 10,446 law enforcement agencies wasted their time and energy to browbeat motorists for not wearing their seatbelts—in a nation where 90,000 women are raped annually; 15,000 people are murdered; 400,000 people are robbed; and 900,000 people are assaulted," said Steve Dasbach, the party's national director.

"That's not public safety—it's public harassment. It's a criminal misuse of law enforcement resources, and Americans should be outraged by it."

This past weekend, 10,446 law enforcement agencies in all 50 states participated in what was called **Operation ABC Mobilization: America Buckles Up Children.**

According to the National Safety Council (NSC)—which coordinated the effort with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration—it was the "largest-ever crackdown on drivers who failed to buckle up themselves."

The NSC bragged that police in all 50 states "are blanketing roadways with checkpoints and safety patrols."

Although comprehensive figures are not available, at least 15,000 "checkpoints and saturation patrols" were operating over the Memorial Day weekend in the southeast USA; more than 300 people were ticketed in Pennsylvania for not wearing seatbelts; and 1,500 checkpoints were operating in Kentucky during the seven days surrounding Memorial Day.

Extrapolate those numbers to all 50 states, said Dasbach, and millions of people were probably inconvenienced, frightened, ticketed, or arrested

because politicians decided that Americans are not smart enough to decide for themselves whether or not to wear seatbelts.

"Seatbelt laws are not a victimless crime," he said. "The real victims of these kinds of nuisance laws are the millions of people who wasted time this Memorial Day weekend in roadblock-caused traffic jams; the

"It is an outrage that 10,446 law enforcement agencies wasted their time and energy to browbeat motorists for not wearing their seatbelts..."

hundreds of thousands of families who were inconvenienced or frightened because they were pulled over by police; and the tens of thousands of minority drivers who saw this as another example of police harassment."

Even worse, said Dasbach, is the tragic waste of police resources.

"Think of the time and money that went into this campaign: 10,446 law enforcement agencies, hundreds of thousands of individual police officers, and millions of dollars from police budgets, all to give tickets to that most fearsome of outlaws—the adult who doesn't wear a seatbelt," he said.

"Now consider that according to FBI figures; there are 1.4 million violent crimes committed in America (murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) every year, along with 10.2 million property crimes. Imagine how many of those crimes could have been solved or prevented if the police focused on protecting Americans against real criminals—instead of targeting the innocent person whose only crime is not wearing a seatbelt."

"This vast outpouring of police activity also conceals an important fact," said Dasbach. "Most Americans already wear seatbelts."

"According to the most recent

studies from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 71 percent of Americans do wear seatbelts, and 97 percent of parents buckle up their children. So 10,446 law enforcement agencies are harassing 100 percent of Americans to catch the 29 percent who don't buckle up—and the 3 percent who don't buckle up their children."

"Again, you have to wonder: Who's committing the real crime? A foolish driver who puts his own safety at risk by not buckling up? Or the politicians and police who harass millions of Americans over a victimless crime—while murderers and rapists are left free to victimize innocent people?"

Source: *Libertarian Party press release.* ↵

News of the NMA

The NMA is cooperating with *Cognigen* to offer more services to members. You can find great bargains on long distance plans, cell phones, satellite tv, computers, and more. The best part of this is that it is a win-win situation. You get great services for an inexpensive price and the NMA will receive a commission on every sale!

Cognigen products and services are featured in the **Motorist Marketplace**. This is a new section on our web site (www.motorists.org) that showcases products and services that may be of interest to you.

If you have a product or service that you would like to advertise in the **Motorist Marketplace** section of the NMA site, please contact Eric Skrum at 608/849-6000 or by emailing him (nma@motorists.org) for more information.

NMA Leadership Profile

Henry Stowe, Activist

When and why did you become an Activist?

I became a member of the NMA in the summer of 1986 in response to a mailing to *Car and Driver* subscribers. My dad sent the letter to me because he knew how much I despised the 55 mph National Maximum Speed Limit (NMSL). That was my number one reason for joining. Although I was really too young to remember the days of 75 mph speed limits, I wanted to help bring them back. I remember Nixon's speech in 1973 that led to the 55 mph NMSL. I thought it was ridiculous that you could get stopped for driving at speeds that were legal prior to January 1974.

In January 1988, I became the State Chapter Coordinator in Texas. I served from 1988 until 1991. After a long hiatus (and moving to North Carolina), I contacted the NMA to become an activist in that state. I became an activist to stir up interest within the membership here in North Carolina. I wanted to serve as a point of contact for the organization.

I believe that the National Motorists Association serves motorists in many ways. The most important function of the NMA is the existence of an organization to fight legislation that harms motorists. The other important function of the NMA is that we assist members with our experience in fighting tickets and unjust legislation. We are literally the opposing view. I hope one day that our view will be accepted by the majority of motorists on the highway. I became an activist so I could contribute to this end.

What are your proudest accomplishments as an Activist?

My proudest accomplishments as an Activist include helping members with their ticket problems and being selected to provide input to various focus groups throughout the state.

What projects are you currently working on?

Projects include stopping the spread of red light cameras and stopping the Photo Radar legislation. These issues represent an infringement on people's privacy and a perpetuation of a "Big Brother" surveillance state. I have contacted legislators on this and other issues.

What are some of your short-term and long-term goals?

Short term goals are to contain anti-motorist legislation. Long term goals are to repeal the safety and emissions inspections, increase all speed limits, and improve roadway planning. That is a pretty tall order. Anyone out there who can help?

What are the most important issues affecting members in your state?

Overall, I think it's the spread of photographic law enforcement.

However, issues that are coming up soon are the emissions testing programs and the sorry state of North Carolina's roadways. North Carolina is faced with a severe capacity problem on its major highways. Increases in truck traffic coupled with massive migration from both the north and the south have resulted in the highways being busy almost 24 hours per day. Something desperately needs to be done about the crowded conditions. Too many of our highways are being ignored in favor of "pork-barrel" local road projects scattered across the state.

Summarize your ticket-fighting experience.

I was the proud recipient of a ticket back in 1998 for doing 78 mph in a 55 mph work zone. The road was empty and straight. The ticket would have cost me my license had I not fought it in court. After renting the *Legal Defense Kit™*, I gained the confidence to cross-examine the cop and raise

objections to the District Attorney. At that point, I got my charge reduced to "speeding" instead of "careless and reckless."

I learned that the court system is heavily biased in favor of law enforcement and that I actually could have appealed that ticket. I should have done it, but the lesson was valuable. There is no substitute for actual courtroom appearances, although I don't want to have to do it again.

I have also been helping members with their tickets since I became involved with the NMA. 🙌

*No Activists
or
State Chapter Coordinator
in your state?
Interested in becoming one?
Contact us for more information.*

Ride to Work Day

The tenth annual national *Ride to Work Day* is July 18. This event is sponsored by *Ride to Work, Inc.* to promote the use of motorcycles. Riding your motorcycle to work on this day will demonstrate:

- a) The number of motorcyclists to the general public and to politicians
- b) That motorcyclists are from all occupations and walks of life
- c) That motorcyclists can reduce traffic congestion in large cities
- d) That motorcycles are for transportation as well as recreation.

For more information, visit www.ridetowork.org
Source: Ride to Work, Inc.

Your Rental Car Is Watching You

By Aarne Frobom

Travelers renting cars are used to surprises from car rental firms, like surcharges, airport taxes, exorbitant prices for fuel and insurance, out-of-service charges not covered by insurance, and other rip-offs masked by the small print in the rental agreement.

But one motorist got an altogether new surprise from Acme Rent-A-Car of New Haven, Connecticut: three speeding tickets. According to a story in the *New Haven Advocate* of June 14, 2001, James Turner was charged \$450 for exceeding 90 mph in a rented minivan on three occasions. These alleged violations went unnoticed by the police, but not by his car. The rental car was equipped with a global positioning receiver and a transmitter that told the owning firm exactly where Turner was during his trip over seven states, and when and where he was thought to have exceeded 90 mph. The small print in his rental agreement told him he was subject to charges for violating posted limits at \$150 per occurrence, and that the car was GPS-equipped, but gave no indication of the capabilities of the system.

As near as we can tell, the transceiver system cannot compare the vehicle's speed with the posted limits on any road. Rather, it seems to record

instances when the vehicle exceeds a pre-set maximum, such as 90 mph. But the transceiver can be set at any number, such as 65 mph in states where that is the highest posted limit. The method used to calculate speed, and its accuracy, is unknown.

Acme buys its GPS services from AirIQ of Pickering, Ontario. AirIQ sells wireless monitoring services to vehicle fleet managers who want to know where their vehicles are and how they're being driven. Truck fleets are typical customers, but car rental firms are a growing part of AirIQ's business. Other firms sell similar services.

A trip to the AirIQ web site reveals that the firm is doing business with licensees of Thrifty, Budget, Advance, and several smaller or single-location car rental firms. Perhaps not all outlets of these firms rent cars with transceivers, but you should probably assume that the next car you rent will have a transceiver in it. AirIQ supplies them for under a dollar a day.

The big attraction for rental firms seems to be recovering abandoned, impounded, or stolen rental cars, especially from cash renters. But the firms are also using GPS to discover violations of rental agreements, such as promises not to take a car out-of-state, or into a certain territory. Rental firms

get to surcharge the renter when that happens. In the case of Mr. Turner, who had given Acme a debit card instead of a credit card, Acme made three \$150 withdrawals from his checking account before he even returned the car. Customers violating their agreements are confronted with computerized maps that show the exact route and time of their travels.

"The power of this feature has endless opportunity," says Anne Taylor, Director of the Rental Vehicle Division of AirIQ, on the firm's web site.

No kidding, Anne. Acme Rent-a-Car has already discovered one opportunity. But there are others just waiting for the right entrepreneur. Think about the opportunity it confers on the low-wage guy behind the desk at the car rental agency. He can now follow your every move, learn your habits, wait for you to drive into deserted territory, and disable your car and unlock its doors, all from his computer. Think what this means if you're a business traveler and your company name indicates you might be carrying high-value goods. Or, if you're an unaccompanied young woman.

Endless opportunity, indeed. ☞

Time To Cancel That MBNA Card

Several years ago the NMA was contacted by the *MBNA Charge Card Company* and was offered the opportunity to have an NMA endorsed charge card program. In exchange for promoting the use of this card, NMA was paid a small commission, based on how many members secured the card and how much they used the card.

We didn't achieve large numbers

of cardholders, but it was still a fairly painless way to obtain two or three hundred dollars each quarter. We would have done more to promote the card, but getting any cooperation out of MBNA was the equivalent of working with a Chinese poultry farmer, in China, and not speaking Chinese.

About a year ago, MBNA informed us that it was discontinuing our charge card

program, of course they would continue to honor and service the cards issued to NMA members—just another example of their generous nature.

So, if you are holding and using an NMA related MBNA charge card, in the mistaken belief the NMA is benefiting, you can now feel free to move onto a more advantageous charge card. ☞

The Continuing Problem With Speed Humps

Speed humps are spreading like a plague across the US. These "traffic calming" measures are proliferating with very little rhyme, reason, or even consistent use.

This is happening, primarily, because many of the speed hump installations are politically motivated rather than safety motivated. It seems a desire by residents to "mark their territory" and reduce traffic, rather than a specific safety concern. Most often, "traffic" is the motivation for speed humps and safety is the spoken excuse for speed humps.

Local officials find it easier to appease speed hump proponents rather than attempting to explain why speed humps won't solve the problem. Politicians would rather oil the squeaky wheel. Consequently, speed humps are being installed without real thought to the consequences of having these devices.

The political nature of traffic calming projects has resulted in an attempt to ignore the realities of speed humps. Speed humps often divert traffic to the next block, or more likely into the adjacent jurisdiction. Residents who live on the new alternative routes then approach the city with their requests for these traffic calming devices. This is a vicious cycle that doesn't address any of the reasons for traffic using local neighborhood streets. Speed humps only aggravate traffic flow and congestion problems.

Speed humps seriously affect the response time of emergency vehicles. An analysis performed by scientist Ronald Bowman in Boulder, Colorado (<http://members.aol.com/raybowman/risk97eval1.html>) and replicated in Austin, Texas by Assistant Fire Chief Les Bunte (http://home.cfl.rr.com/gidusko/texts/tfc_calm.pdf), shows that even minor delays in emergency vehicle response time is far more detrimental to public health and safety

then can be offset by any perceived reduction in "speeding."

Speed humps can also cause pain and injury to some residents with disabilities. The devices limit their access to public rights-of-way, guaranteed under the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act).

There is increasing evidence of the danger of calming devices to passengers traveling in vehicles as well as to the vehicles themselves. In the state of Rhode Island, there is a raised device that launched a police officer in the air, landing him in the hospital. The same device was responsible for breaking the axle of a fire truck, costing \$15,000. Fire fighters, injured from being thrown to the roofs of their cabs hitting speed humps, have been placed on permanent disability. Legislation has been introduced to remove the specific speed hump.

In many areas, when communities request speed humps, none of these factors are addressed. If your community or one nearby is requesting speed humps, you need to speak out. The NMA site has an entire section on traffic calming (at <http://www.motorists.org/issues/engineering/index.html>) You can find a guide on how to oppose traffic calming in your area, a personal account of one member's fight against speed humps, research articles, and links to other groups that oppose these devices. 

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As a business member, you receive

a 15% discount toward the purchase of any NMA advertising package. Your company officers are included in our Traffic Justice Program, and are eligible for all of our regular NMA benefits.

If you are interested in becoming a

business member and supporting the NMA in this manner, please call the national office at 608/849-6000 for more information.

Thank you, to all of our 2000 business members. 📧

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News From Around The Country

Arizona

The city of Mesa is considering disconnecting several red light cameras. There are reports that several of the cameras are losing money, so the company operating the cameras (Lockheed Martin IMS) is requesting that the cameras be taken down. The company was expecting to catch 18 violators a day, but in some instances is only catching one. Mesa Police Commander Richard Clore has stated this may be due to the fact that the city recently lengthened its yellow lights by a second on the several intersections in question.

California

San Diego is launching an investigation on its 19 red light cameras. While gathering information for a trial, police officers discovered that the underground sensor loops at three intersections had been moved by the private company that operates the cameras—Lockheed Martin. The move was done without authorization or knowledge of city officials. Officials have dismissed over 5000 tickets so far and will not issue any more tickets until an independent audit is done.

Also in California, a 30-day grace period to warn motorists about running red lights in Ventura is over, as cameras set up at two intersections will now send citations costing a minimum of \$271. Within five days of being caught on camera, a violator will receive a computer printout in the mail, complete with multiple photographs of the incident and a court date. The cameras are set up at the intersections of Victoria Avenue and Telegraph Road, and Victoria Avenue and Telephone Road.

Massachusetts

A bill that would have allowed primary enforcement of seatbelts was voted down in the House with a tie vote.

Missouri

St. Louis County's traffic planners have released a new study entitled "'Stop' Signs and Speed." The study points out that stop signs are overrated as a way to control speeders on neighborhood streets and there's evidence that too many signs actually could make some people drive faster. The report implies that there's very little quality control. The conclusion of the report is that superfluous stop signs breed contempt among the motoring public—many of whom don't come to a full stop because of this.

New Hampshire

New Hampshire Governor Jeanne Shaheen has asked the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for an early withdrawal from the federal Reformulated Gasoline (RFG) program, citing water contamination concerns from a key gasoline additive. The discovery of methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE)—used in the production of federally-mandated green gasoline—in groundwater and surface water throughout the state has prompted the waiver request.

New Jersey

A bill that would add 192 miles of 65 mph zones to the 475 miles that already have that limit cleared the Assembly Transportation Committee. The bill, however, would not go as far as a Senate bill that calls for adding 360 miles at the greater speed.

New York

Governor George Pataki has proposed a statewide ban on driving while using a handheld cellular phone. A violation would count as a traffic infraction, with fines of \$25 to \$100. A second violation within 18 months could cost the driver \$100 to \$300. The Department of Motor Vehicles could also impose points on a violator's license.

North Dakota

Governor John Hoeven recently vetoed a bill that would have raised interstate speeds from 70 mph to 75 mph.

Oregon

Governor John Kitzhaber, House Speaker Mark Simmons and others are working on compromise legislation to raise Oregon's present 65 mph limit. One of the main points of the legislation that has yet to be worked out is whether to raise the speed limit to 70 mph or 75 mph.

Pennsylvania

House Bill 467 addresses changes in how calibration is done for speed measurement devices. This bill would make the requirements less stringent. House Bill 953 is a bill that would make radar detectors illegal to use.

Wisconsin

Wisconsin has several bills that deal with one ban or another on driving while using cell phones. A bill by Representative Pedro Colon (D-Milwaukee) would require motorists to use hands-free cell phone devices. Representative Tony Staskunas (D-West Allis) would outlaw the use of cell phones by motorists who have a probationary license, which usually means those 16 to 18 years old.

Also, Wisconsin has Assembly Bill 363 which will require headlamps on a motor vehicle to be lighted whenever the vehicle is operated on a highway regardless of time of day or weather conditions. This bill is currently in the Committee on Highway Safety. ☞

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The Experts' Corner

Do you have a question that only an expert can answer? If so, look no further. We have many NMA members with special fields of expertise. This feature was created to assist members with answers to both practical and technical questions.

This sharing of knowledge is another benefit of belonging to the NMA. Please indicate that you are an NMA member when calling a listed "expert."

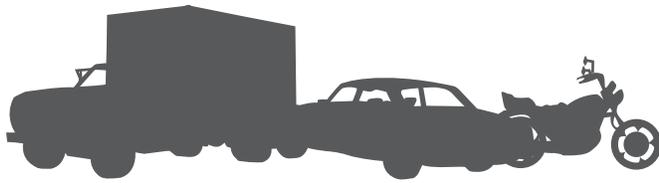
Can you help? Please contact us with your field of expertise and provide us with a contact address.

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PLEASE NOTE: This is not intended for listing of commercial business services.

As an NMA member, the Experts' Corner is available to you online at

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MEMBERS WRITE

Your letters are welcomed and appreciated. This is a forum for diverse opinions, different perspectives, and personal experiences. Letters may be edited for length or clarity. Letters should not exceed 300 words in length. Full-length articles will also be considered for publication in the NMAF NEWS. Articles should not exceed 600 words in length. Positions and opinions expressed in letters and member-authored articles are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect NMA policies or objectives. To submit, you can email us at nma@motorists.org or mail to our NMAF Office.

Back in the early '90s, I made a feeble attempt to stop the photo enforcement nonsense. James Baxter (NMA President) and Jim Thomas (California Activist) offered me any assistance I needed. Mr. Baxter (or was it Mr. Thomas) sent me folders of information on photo radar which I sent to all the town counsel members. I tried to pursue the matter, but I'm a carpenter and away from the telephone all day. They wore me down, and got their way. Now we are all paying for their ignorance. I am reading the March/April issue of *NMAF NEWS* and the Prophet, James Baxter is right (as usual). As long as they think there's money in it, they will keep coming.

Andy Norris
Santa Rosa, CA

As a former NYC Police Officer I can firmly state there *are* quotas—mostly for "traffic tickets." But, I think a little clarification is in order. I was assigned, in my precinct, to give out parking tickets and did just that. It was like shooting fish in a barrel as 50 tickets a day was not unheard of. Of course, if I wanted, I could have given 200 a day. My point about a quota is that I had to justify my existence in the street and to end my tour with, say, 15 tickets, would not have been wise. That would have subjected me to scrutiny by my superiors; a condition to be avoided at all cost.

Since my retirement in 1985, my thinking has turned totally around

(too late for the recipients of thousands of tickets) and now I can see, thanks to the National Motorists Association and others how the dollar rules. What a shame.

Henry A. Kelcinski
Kunkletown, PA

Lately, there has been a great deal of news regarding the use of cell phones in vehicles. Some government entities have been passing statutes limiting the use of phones. And lately, there has been some interest in passing laws to make it illegal to drive while "tired." As long as our government officials are thinking in terms of absurd laws, why not pass a law making it illegal to "talk" to other occupants of a car, or to be "playing the radio" while driving? Both of these activities take attention away from the task at hand. Being a staunch supporter of the rights of non-smokers, my favorite law would ban smoking in vehicles by the driver. Let's ban smoking by all occupants as the breathing of smoke decreases the amount of oxygen available to the lungs of the driver.

The government could mandate the use of smoke (and voice) detectors like those in the lavatories of airliners. When the detector detects smoke, the use of a radio, or any conversation, the engine would immediately be disabled and the police summoned. The driver would immediately be arrested and fined. There would be no need for the court

system as the driver would instantly be deemed guilty.

The ACLU would have a field day with such laws. It is hard to understand why they and many others are so silent as our freedoms are being slowly, but systematically surrendered to our government in the name of safety. Like the NRA with guns, we must not surrender even the smallest of freedoms with respect to driving. Keep up the good work.

Paul DiSarro
Milford, NJ

I wanted to notify fellow NMA members of a safety issue that concerns me. On I-65 through Bowling Green, Kentucky, both the north and southbound lanes are under construction. When entering the construction zone from either end, there are police speed measuring radar boards that present your speed as you approach the area. You know, the ones that say, "your speed is X." A big safety issue that I have noticed is that if your speed is over the speed limit of the construction zone, a bright 5 inch strobe light will flash about 5 times at random intervals which I guess is to get your attention. In the daytime, it does catch your eye, however, at night the strobe action is so bright that you literally become the "deer in headlights." The random flash pattern coupled with the brightness

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Members Write

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is blinding to the eye. So much so that you have to look away while at the same time suddenly driving in a state of panic to swerve and/or brake to try to avoid this sudden object in front of you. I feel that this situation is one of those that authorities believe will slow down traffic in a construction zone. Personally, I see no obvious effect on "safety" for drivers or construction workers. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if it causes accidents from time to time. Just thought you might want to know about it.

Steve Borgman
Lewisburg, TN

Editor's Note: We are sending a copy of Steve's letter to the Kentucky Department of Transportation and suggesting that the strobe light be de-activated.

The anti-DRL drivers among us must be causing some pain in the GM Board Room. For about two years now, GM has been silently offering an option to delete the DRLs on US-market vehicles. If you're shopping for a new GM vehicle and don't want DRLs, option T62 will do the trick.

GM still doesn't get it though. Prospective GM owners should not have to do this. They should be able to turn the DRLs off permanently; without going to the dealer, using tools, or having to special-order the vehicle. It can be done. The 2000 Chevy pickups have a way to temporarily defeat the DRLs by pushing a button a few times, but the system resets every time the engine is started. Had GM spent another 30 minutes of engineering time on it, they could be turned off permanently that way.

Bob Morrow
Butte, MT

I am a longstanding member (since 1985) and as such I like to pay attention to the BS emanating from Washington DC. It appears that our fight against the 55mph speed limit is never going to be over. On Fox News' 05-28-01 "O'Reilly Factor" Mr. O'Reilly was interviewing Geraldine Ferrarro about the current "energy crisis" and Ms. Ferrarro's first suggestion was to reinstate the 55 mph speed limit. Unfortunately, O'Reilly did not counter her statement with questions such as "why would it work now when it did not work in the past?" or "why is the answer to a failed energy policy to be the usurpation of freedom?"

James W. Saltsman
East Grand Rapids, MI

Please allow me space for critical comments about what I consider the **Manual on Uniform**[ly Stupid] **Traffic Control Devices**. Yes, STUPID! On p. vii of the 1988 Edition, the incompetents even misspell the name of the manual!

I'm delighted the bureaucrats announced changes to the Manual. That is exactly what I proposed in **COMMON SENSE about Our Right to Travel** at my website (*the friendlystranger.com*). They should rewrite the book. "Changes" is a neutral term. The changes must benefit motorists, not harm us. "Control?" Why "Control" and not "Expediting?" "Expediting" is "speeding up the process or progress of, facilitating." THAT should be their goal, not "Control."

Replace those idiotic **SPEED ZONE AHEAD** and **SPEED ZONE ENDS** signs. If a school is in a school zone, then logic indicates that we can **speed** in a **speed** zone, correct? **SLOW DOWN NOW!!** is an unmistakable effective message.

Eliminate the **NO HITCHHIKING** sign (R9-4) and replace it with one which informs people about their right and how to do it

safely. A ban on hitchhiking violates our right to travel and freely associate with others.

Many **STOP** signs are totally unnecessary and should be replaced by **YIELD** or **MERGE** signs. Consider changing signs from **STOP** to **YOUR FAULT**. This would prevent the Blue Bludgeons from hassling people who roll thru them.

Ed Hughes
Fort Lee, NJ

NHTSA Nomination

President Bush has announced that he will nominate Jeffrey William Runge as **NHTSA (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)** administrator.

Runge is currently assistant chairman of the Carolinas Medical Center's department of emergency medicine in Charlotte, N.C. The hospital identified his specialty as "injury research including resuscitation, brain injury and traffic safety." In 1996, as an employee at the NHTSA he received the Highway Safety Leadership Award.

Runge, a 1981 graduate of the Medical University of South Carolina, is a past chairman of the American College of Emergency Physicians injury prevention and control subcommittee and currently serves on the organization's trauma care and injury control committee.

Source: Associated Press

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