



Driving Freedoms
NMA Foundation

TABLE OF CONTENTS
Volume 17 • Issue 1

Conflict Of Interest.....2
NMA Washington Report.....3
Still Racing Strong3
Driving In Britain? You'll Be Watched.4
Canada Plans To Slow Down Trucks.....4
Speeding Up In The Auto State6
Suddenly Safety Is A Concern.....6
Energy May Be A Problem, But Ethanol
Isn't The Solution7
A Report On 2006 NMA Initiatives.....8
NMA Massachusetts Holiday Party.....11
Putting Laser Jammers To The Test.....11
News From Around The Country12
William J. Holdorf (1926-2006).....13
Thank You, BMW CCA!.....13
The Experts' Corner.....14
NMA Items For Purchase15
SCCs and Activists List.....16

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COVER
"Legislative Drive"

Conflict Of Interest

by James J. Baxter, President, NMA

Lately, there's been a lot of chatter about political ethics (I know it's an oxymoron), business transparency, and people in positions of authority who use that authority for their own economic advantage. The press seems to "get it" when Senator Smith is caught collecting bags of money from lobbyists or when a major business tanks because insiders have been robbing the company blind.

But, when some state decides to steal hundreds of millions of dollars from motorists, the media mavins are on vacation. Either that or they are incapable of recognizing a blatant scam that rears up like a purple elephant at a cat show.

We have had the "opportunity" for more exposure than usual to the Virginia legislature. Last year, we actively supported the "sun-setting" of the red light camera law. (The demise may be short lived, but that's another story.) This year, we campaigned to repeal that state's ban on radar detectors. We were not successful in this latter effort, but a similar bill may surface during next year's session.

Last year and this year, a bill was introduced in the Virginia Legislature to "punish dangerous drivers." This is code for further ripping off citizens who acquired a couple of traffic tickets. Receiving a traffic ticket has a lot more to do with how much someone drives, rather than how they drive.

We're not talking pocket change here. If you have four or more points on your license, you will be fined \$100. If you have more than four points, you will be fined an additional \$75 per point. There are also fines for specific violations in addition to what you will be charged for points.

A reckless driving ticket, for example, will cost you \$350 on top of the point fees! The fiscal

estimate calls for this law to generate \$600 million dollars in state revenue. This is 30 percent of the total money programmed for highway projects!

So who's championing this public campaign to add insult to injury for traffic ticket recipients. The state police? Underemployed MADD volunteers? The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety? Nope. None of the above.

The sponsor of this legislation is Delegate David Albo, from Fairfax County. And, what does Mr. Albo do when not sticking it to motorists in the House of Delegates? Why, he's a traffic ticket attorney, a partner in a firm specializing in helping people on the verge of losing their driver licenses. His firm puts lots of emphasis on their DUI expertise, which may become even more in demand, if Delegate Albo's new DUI surcharge of \$750 becomes law.

That begs the question, why would anyone want to hire an attorney who is responsible for much of their predicament in the first place?

Well, most folks won't know or realize that they're dealing with someone playing both sides f the deck. And, they aren't getting any help from the press. The dots aren't that hard to connect—a lawyer that specializes in traffic tickets is the legislator pushing for harsh traffic ticket penalties that will push ticket recipients to hire lawyers to defend them against harsh traffic ticket penalties. Is this too hard to understand?

Sounds like a conflict of interest to me. If a legislator promotes legislation that will steer business to his company, it would certainly be recognized as unethical. What's the real difference from this and what Delegate Albo is doing? I would certainly like to know. ■



NMA Washington Report by Robert Talley, NMA Lobbyist

The legislative session in 2006 will be shortened by the upcoming November elections. History indicates that political rhetoric in election years often slows the pace of legislating to a crawl. Despite this, the NMA will seek two legislative initiatives at the federal level to pursue our agenda of supporting your rights. The first is a clarification regarding the usage of the data captured by Event Data Recorders (EDRs) or "black boxes" and the owners' rights associated with that data. The second is a prohibition of federal funding for automated enforcement devices.

Our first initiative is designed to fill a void left by a jurisdictional gap regarding EDR data that the courts are filling in on an extemporized basis. Many new vehicles produced today include an EDR that monitors the vehicle and stores data in the event of an accident. These monitors were initially placed in

vehicles to assist research on vehicle accidents, and were promoted as safety devices.

For the most part, the American public has no knowledge of the existence of these units, let alone the potential liability they can be. To date, courts have generally held that data from EDRs is suitable as evidence in court proceedings and may be used against the owner of the automobile to convict him or her of a crime. Among other things, the obvious questions regarding the right to privacy and the fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution remain largely unresolved despite repeated use of this data by the courts.

Automated enforcement devices are also a target of this year's initiative. Our newsletter, *Driving Freedoms*, has often covered the topics of red-light cameras and photo radar. You may even live where they are in operation and,

even if you don't, there is a good chance you will drive through a jurisdiction with this technology.

These systems are rigged to produce tickets regardless of safety. In order to make money from these devices, law enforcement must set them up in a manner that optimizes infractions. Typically this is in areas where speed limits are too low or intersections' yellow lights are too short for existing conditions. If you are skeptical about this critique, consider that the revenue sharing agreements under which these programs operate make no sense without a profit motive for the businesses that run the systems. There is no justification for the federal government to subsidize the installation of these systems.

These two initiatives present an opportunity for the NMA to protect its membership and the driving public. We have an aggressive agenda for 2006, and we will need the help of the membership to weigh in on our behalf and assist us with passing these provisions. With enough input, these protections can become law. ■

Still Racing Strong

Ray Statz could not afford a racing hobby until he was 25 years old. Then, in his words, "I kinda O-D'ed and found myself racing cars, tractors, snowmobiles, and motorcycles." He finally settled on motorcycles. After age 50 he retired from the enduro and ice racing circuit, but he didn't take up golf. His business, Qualine Fence, and his family consumed most of his time.

When 60 started to crowd 70, Ray was introduced to autocross. For his 69th birthday, one of his sons treated him to a day of autocross. He opted to drive his VW ten cylinder diesel! That proved to be not quite the perfect tool for the job. But, Ray was hooked and

that winter he set out to buy a better "tool" for the task at hand. The result was a replica of the Porsche 550 Spyder (think James Dean). It became his 70th birthday mid-life crisis present.

After one season of six races, the car looks great—the race results not so great. The steering and the suspension left something to be desired and the VW bug transmission was characteristically temperamental. There were those who thought a former tractor "racer" might have been lacking in piloting skills, but that thought was quickly dismissed.

In all racing there is the catch phrase "wait until next year." And Ray

reflects, "I now have a hobby that consumes much of my thinking time, most of my social security checks, and keeps the blood flowing. And, the ten cylinder VW is the perfect tow vehicle." ■



Ray Statz is a long time member, supporter, and friend of the NMA.

Driving In Britain? You'll Be Watched.

Great Britain is set to become the first country in the world where the movements of all vehicles on the roads will be tracked and recorded. Authorities are busy updating a network of thousands of existing cameras so they can automatically read license plates. Day and night, these cameras will film motorists' activities on main roads, bridges, ports, and at many gas stations.

The government's Orwellian plan is to build a huge database of vehicle movements so the police and security services can analyze any journey a driver makes. The new surveillance system will hold all license-plate records for at least two years.

The database, which will be up and running later this month, will store over 35 million license-plate readings per day. Each record will include time, date, and precise location. The system will automatically crosscheck each license plate against a list of stolen and suspect vehicles. All vehicles will also be checked to see whether or not they are lawfully registered, insured, and

have a valid emissions test certificate.

Even though the system is in its infancy, there are already plans to expand the database by increasing the storage period to five years. Also, plans include linking thousands of



additional cameras to the system, so that details of up to 100 million license-plate records can be stored each day.

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) orchestrated this scheme, and it has the full backing of the national government. Local authorities have also been supportive of the heavy-handed plan; dozens have signed agreements to allow the police to convert thousands of existing traffic cameras so they can read license plates automatically. Likewise, authorities are

courting private business owners with the hope that they can expand the camera system into most business parking lots.

According to the strategy document drawn up by ACPO, the national data center, where the database will be located along with the Police National Computer, will be at the heart of a surveillance operation that would help to prevent crime. Admittedly, the new data center will provide unrivalled opportunities to gather intelligence data on the movements and associations of gangs and terrorists.

However, it will also be used to track the detailed movements of millions of law-abiding people. It could then be used to expand remote tolling schemes, like the one in London, nationwide. It could also be expanded into a nationwide speed enforcement system as well. Amazingly, the dissent over this radical program has been very limited. As photo enforcement expands here in the United States and Canada, one wonders if the system in Great Britain is a vision of our future. ■

Canada Plans To Slow Down Trucks

For decades, split speed limits have been used to try to slow tractor-trailers. This type of dangerous speed limit contributes to differences in speed between truckers and other motorists, which in turn, leads to more accidents. This is just one reason why split limits have disappeared in many locations, although they still persist elsewhere.

Unfortunately, Canadian authorities are now considering a plan that makes the threat of split speed limits seem mild by comparison. The proposed policy would make the activation of "speed limiters" mandatory in semis.

In the last issue of *Driving Freedoms*, we reported on speed-limiting devices being testing in vehicles in Canada. These units combine global positioning satellite (GPS) technology and a digital speed limit map to limit a driver's ability to

accelerate in particular speed zones. Technologically, the proposed truck limiters would be far less sophisticated, but they would also limit drivers' maneuverability, and could therefore be just as dangerous.



According to the Canadian Trucking Alliance (CTA), support for this proposal is growing among Canada's provincial trucking associations. In fact, the Ontario Trucking Association is responsible for the idea of limiters. Under their proposal, no trucks would ever be able to travel faster than 105 km an hour—about 65 mph.

The CTA has not yet ratified a position on the use of "limiters," but its chief executive officer, David Bradley, said that the issue will likely be discussed by the group's board this spring.

The CTA's support for such a measure may seem surprising, but given that large trucking firms dominate the organization, it actually fits a long-standing pattern. For example, in the United States, large trucking firms have often supported lower speed limits. Meanwhile, groups like OOIDA, which represent only owner-operators and independent drivers have sought the exact opposite. For large firms, there is no incentive to speed up transit, rather they benefit from a system that does not allow their competitors to move goods more efficiently than they can. ■



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Speeding Up In The Auto State

Lately, there has been a flurry of development on the speed limit front in Michigan. Amazingly, it is mostly good news.

First of all, the Michigan Court of Appeals ruled that the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Michigan State Police (MSP) have the authority to make speed limit decisions on state roads, regardless of local objections.

The court's decision appears to have ended a multi-year battle between the city of East Lansing and state officials. Some time ago, a speed study con-

ducted by the MSP at the request of East Lansing concluded that the speed limits along Saginaw Highway and Grand River Avenue, which are both state roads, were too low and caused unsafe travel conditions.

Higher speed limits were proposed, but the city resisted and took the matter to court. Initially, the city's challenge was successful at the circuit court level. However, the appeals court overturned that decision. The three-judge panel wrote in their opinion, "It is clear that the legislature treats business districts and school zones differently than other

sections of highway, but it is not clear that the legislature intended to transfer exclusive control of speed limits in these sections to local governments in these areas."

In most other states, motorists might cringe at the thought of state police being given more authority over speed limits, but in Michigan this is good news. The State Police have shown a sincere desire to raise many of Michigan's under-posted limits. The MSP and traffic engineering firm Hubbell, Roth & Clark recently produced a brochure about setting realistic speed limits, which stresses the same points the NMA has for decades.

Another critically outdated aspect of Michigan's speed law is about to change for the better. Governor Jennifer Granholm recently signed House Bill 5104, which will raise the freeway speed limit for heavy trucks from 55 to 60 mph, while the limit for other vehicles would remain 70 mph. The elimination of the state's split speed limit would have been better, but this is still a step in the right direction. The new speed limits for trucks will go into effect November 9, 2006.

Potentially the biggest newsmaker of all is House Bill 5240, which would radically change the way Michigan's local speed limits are set. If the bill passes, speed limits would be determined according to the number of access points (entrances and exits) along a road.

For example, the speed on a road with 60 or more access points per half mile would be set at 30 miles per hour; for roads with 45 to 59 access points the speed would be 35 miles per hour; and for roads with 30 to 44 access points it would be 45 miles per hour. The net result would be higher speed limits on most streets. The act would also raise the minimum speed on freeway to 55 miles per hour. The legislation, which is sponsored by House Majority Whip Brian Palmer, has passed both Houses, although minor variations remain to be reconciled before the bill is signed. ■

Suddenly Safety Is A Concern

A few months ago, we reported on Coopertown, Tennessee. The gist of the article was that Mayor Danny Crosby had reduced speed limits in the city to specifically generate money. This was done without consulting any traffic engineers or any agency that would have an understanding of speed limit safety.

The controversy over this move continues. The community is upset not only with the speed limit change (even the city council is questioning the legality of this), but also that their city is garnering negative attention nationwide due to the National Motorists Association. Specifically, our Speed Trap Exchange (www.speedtrap.org) has listed Coopertown as an official speed trap and the media is jumping all over this designation.

It has also been reported that Mayor Crosby is going to return the speed limit to the original 55 mph. He is citing safety reasons for this about-face.

"I'm not going to get some innocent person killed," explained Crosby. "I witnessed a person doing the speed limit and three people passed crossing the double yellow lines. The last one almost had a head-on collision doing 70 (miles an hour). I know this for a fact because it was me."

In other words, until Crosby was almost hit head-on and he was put in danger, the lower limits weren't a problem.

He denies he is doing this because of the many complaints he has received, pressure from the city council, or bad publicity from the media.

"All of the ugly letters that have been written, I want these people to know that their bad opinions have had nothing to do with the change," said Crosby. "The change has been made for the safety of Coopertown."

This ignores the fact that it was Crosby who caused the danger in the first place simply to balance the city's budget. Hopefully, residents will keep this in mind during the next election. ■

Energy May Be A Problem, But Ethanol Isn't The Solution

by John Holevoet, Director of Development

Even though driving affects millions of people every single day, issues facing motorists are rarely at the forefront of public policy. Our leaders believe that there are more important problems that need to be addressed, and in some cases, they are right.

A recent exception to this rule is gasoline prices, which made headlines all summer long, and have again begun to creep upwards. This contributed to President Bush's decision to mention the need for renewable fuels during his State of the Union address in January.

Providing for our growing energy needs is certainly an issue. The president has called for "an advanced energy initiative" that would, among other things, replace more than 75 percent of U.S. oil imports from the Middle East with homegrown alternatives like ethanol by 2025. I don't claim to have the answer to our energy problems, but I know that ethanol shouldn't be part of it.

For decades, Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), that self-proclaimed "supermarket to the world" and leading ethanol producer, has tried to position ethanol as the poster child of renewable energy. They have won the support of many politicians and the media by promoting a romantic image of downtrodden farmers freeing our nation from the reign of greedy oil barons, all while protecting the environment. You may have found this concept romantic yourself. As a farmer kid from the Midwest, I have to admit that I did. However, it simply is not based on reality.

First of all, ethanol is not good for the environment. Rather, its environmental problems have long been obvious. The Clean Air Act of 1977 actually banned products such as ethanol, and EPA testing showed that vehicles using ethanol produced more dangerous emissions than cars using gasoline. Later, the Clinton administration toyed with the idea of an ethanol mandate. Associated research conducted in 1994 and 1995 found that ethanol did not have a positive

environmental impact.

American farmers do not benefit either. First of all, a good deal of the ethanol produced abroad is made from surplus European wine, among other things. Furthermore, even if all of our "homegrown" fuel was actually grown at home, its benefits for farmers would be dubious at best. Ethanol production does boost the price of corn, but this cost is passed on to farmers who raise livestock. The so-called benefits of ethanol are a classic example of robbing Peter to pay Paul. Higher feed costs get passed on to consumers.

Now that we've dispelled the two most prominent myths about ethanol's "wonders," why stop? Ethanol is certainly not short on problems. For example, ethanol-blended fuels can damage older cars, motorcycles, snowmobiles, and boat engines. Ethanol will lower your gas mileage. Each gallon of ethanol contains about two-thirds as much energy as does gasoline, so the decrease in miles per gallon is even greater when the fuel blend contains more ethanol.

The last nail in ethanol's proverbial coffin is that it is not produced by a

sustainable industry. The federal government already subsidizes ethanol by over one billion dollars a year, and that is on top of subsidies provided by numerous states. Right now ethanol is so labor intensive and expensive that some studies have shown that it expends as much or more energy to manufacture than the end product provides for consumers. That's right, ethanol may have a negative energy impact! The day may come when oil prices will be so high and bio-fuel production methods will have improved so greatly that ethanol is a practical economic alternative, but we are a long way from that point, and even then ethanol still has shortcomings.

Yes, oil prices have been higher than we are used to, and yes, this problem will only grow in the future. Alternatives to oil should be researched, but there is no reason, at this early stage, to rush into policy commitments. When one looks at the alternative fuel playing field, there are nothing but possibilities. Let's not settle for ethanol. ■






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A Report On

Legislative Drive 2006

Issues facing motorists are many and varied, but after careful consideration, the NMA staff has identified two areas on which to focus the association's national legislative efforts.

The first is regulating the use of Event Data Recorders (EDRs) or "black boxes" in cars. Every year, these devices become more pervasive and record more data, which can be used against unsuspecting motorists. The most frightening aspect of these devices is not their current application, but the manner in which they could be used as this technology continues to advance and change.

With this in mind, the NMA hopes to pass legislative safeguards relating to EDRs, which include regulations that would make the public more aware of these devices. This educational effort will help us to empower consumers, allowing them to opt out of EDR data collection by turning the device off, have

easier access to EDR data themselves, and protect themselves from coercive insurance practices. Additionally, we plan to protect motorists' privacy by ensuring the EDR data does not contain any identifiers and that data could only be obtained with the vehicle owner's consent or a formal court order.

Our other major legislative effort would be to establish guidelines for the use of photo enforcement and link compliance to federal funding. This would allow the NMA's opponents to face the same threat of federal blackmail that they have used in the past.

Our proposed standards would make it far more difficult for cities to install ticket cameras and would effectively eliminate profit from these devices. First of all, all photo radar would have to be supervised, and all photo enforcement devices would have to undergo routine daily testing for accuracy. Intersections or roadways with photo enforcement

would have to meet specific standards for posted speed limits and yellow-light intervals. Our ideal legislation would also provide various legal protections for motorists, such as a requirement that photo enforcement citations be handled the same as officer-issued tickets for similar offenses.

We set our sights high in 2006, and we hope to deliver tangible results. To ensure our success, we need your help. First of all, we ask that you consider supporting our effort financially. You can use the form on the next page to make a contribution. Also, as our legislative efforts advance, we'll need your help convincing legislators to support our measures. Thoughtful letters to your congressional representatives can make a serious impact. For updates on the NMA's legislative progress, look for future articles in *Driving Freedoms* and on our web site, www.motorists.org. ■

In The Lion's Den

by John Holevoet, Director Of Development

"Would you like to come to a conference where everyone will disagree with you?" "Sure," I said. After over two years of working for the NMA, I am used to championing the minority view. In this case, I could be even bolder because despite the views of other conference attendees, the public tends to see things our way.

The NMA had been asked to participate in a panel discussion relating to the legal and privacy implications of EDRs in vehicles. I was chosen as our representative, and I was looking forward to learning more about these devices, especially because details relating to them are so sketchy. I also thought the conference would provide me with an opportunity to see what the opposing side in this debate had to say, particularly given the fact that we were making legislation on EDRs a top priority for NMA.

First of all, the conference certainly was a learning experience. I heard about the history of the technology, more about how these devices work, and how data is typically recovered from them. It became clear that the preferred type of EDR is a Vetronix-compatible unit found in most GM and some Ford models during the past several model years. Data

continued on page ten

The Good, Bad, And Ugly

There is no lack of news to report regarding the spread of photo enforcement. Some of it is positive, some is negative. The rapid spread of this technology and the ever-broadening scope of its capabilities have motivated us to make photo enforcement one of our top legislative priorities.

Let's begin with the good news. In West Virginia, a bill is advancing that would require a police officer to be present near any photo radar unit. Delegate Randy Swartzmiller, who was incensed after receiving a camera ticket in Ohio, sponsored the measure. The bill, H.B. 4004, made it quickly through committee, and has passed the House of Delegates by a vote of 88-3. The proposal has moved on to the state's senate, where its prospects are good.

Elsewhere, the developments were often more complex. For example, Florida representative Ron Reagan again introduced legislation that would enable local governments to install red-light cameras. House Speaker Allan Bense opposes the measure and won't allow the legislation to come up for a vote. Unfortunately, when Bense's term as speaker runs out, the chances of the measure passing are very good.

Camera advocates in Virginia failed to reactivate that state's ticket-camera program. Despite their best efforts,

continued on page ten

2006 NMA Initiatives

Donate Today And You Could Be Off To Europe!

The travel experts at www.driveeurope.com have donated a terrific driving tour to be given away to one lucky NMA donor. Simply mail in your contribution today and you will **receive one entry for every \$30 you donate**. This means the more you give, the better your chances of winning! As an added bonus: If you respond by April 1st, we'll double your chances of winning!

The winner of the 2006 sweepstakes will have his or her choice of one of these eight-day tours: The deadline for entry is June 1, 2006. Don't miss out on your chance. Respond Today!



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Experience Rome, the "Eternal City." See the Coliseum, Vatican, and Forum. Visiting this terrific city would make a great vacation by itself, but you'll also get to drive through breathtaking Tuscany. See the region's lovely fortified towns and cities, such as Siena and Pisa, at your own pace.



Yes! I want to make both of the NMA's legislative goals a success in 2006. To help, I would like to make the following donation:

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Lion's Den

continued from page eight

modules from other manufacturers were usually more limited and often more difficult to access.

As for Vetronix units, I received a detailed list of the different modules in use, which vehicle makes and models they could be found in, and what data they recorded. This information is certainly valuable, and NMA members interested in it can feel free to contact our office for more information.

I also learned about the strengths of the technology, like the durability of these devices, and their faults, such as the lack of pre-crash data from some modules and errors that can contribute to incorrect speed measurements.

As for my spot on the panel, I was a little nervous about it. Especially, because the morning before I was

supposed to speak, another person gave a presentation on "rational policy" for EDRs, and spoke of privacy as if it were a dirty word.

However, when the time came for the panel, I was ready. I shared the spotlight with Chris Voeglie, an investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board; Brad Muir, a Constable with the Ontario Provincial Police, who has used EDR technology for many years; and Bill Melkonian, an Assistant District Attorney from Essex, Massachusetts, who has used EDR data for several prosecutions. The discussion was animated, and I made our points as best I could within the established question-answer format.

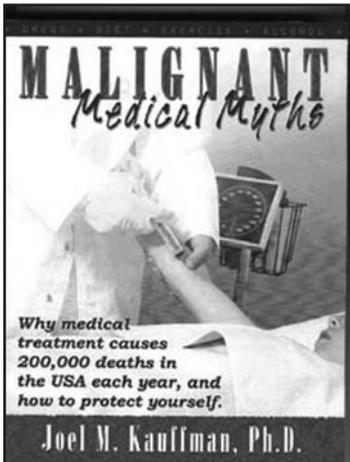
Afterwards, I slipped off to my hotel room hoping to avoid any possible confrontations. Oddly, I found that during the next day, I was constantly being congratulated on doing a good

job, and numerous attendees confided that they agreed with us in whole or at least in part.

These little asides drove home the point that our call for regulating these controversial devices is not only reasonable, it enjoys popular support. It is easy to fall into the mindset of constantly being on the defensive. My experience in this regard certainly helped at this conference. The good news is that beyond the insulated group of conference attendees, we enjoy broad support for legislative controls on EDRs.

Better still, all of the conference attendees, even those who vehemently disagree with us and see no privacy concerns related to these devices, know that the public's view is closer to ours than their own. So much for the defensive, we are perfectly poised to go on the offensive with this issue, and in 2006, we'll do just that. ■

**NMA Foundation's
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reveals 11 myths of
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Good, Bad, Ugly

continued from page eight

support from the Virginia Senate, and a total of three different bills that would have suited their purposes, the House Militia, Police and Public Safety Committee once again killed all of the pro-camera measures. One lone senator is attempting a last ditch effort to renew cameras. NMA Activist Jim Kadison is monitoring the situation, and we're hopeful this attempt will fail.

Springfield became the latest city in Missouri to move forward with a plan for red-light cameras. However, there is hope that S.B. 719, legislation that would prohibit their use anywhere in the state, will be successful. Similarly, in Arizona, plans by municipalities to use photo radar on state and/or limited-access highways have progressed, but this has motivated several legislators to call for more limits on photo enforcement. The key bill to watch is SB 1146, which is the only measure that would totally ban the use of photo radar on limited-access, or interstate-like, highways. This bill has already passed the state senate and will be

taken up by the House Transportation Committee soon.

Now it's time for the ugly. These negative developments highlight some of our future challenges. In December, outraged residents of Akron, Ohio bombarded their city council with complaints about Akron's then new photo radar system. The cameras had been issuing \$150-250 tickets to those driving as little as five miles-per-hour over the limit in poorly marked school zones with no children present. To quell dissent, the council retroactively lowered the fine to \$35 and issued refunds for the difference. However, as of February 22, the tickets will be back up to \$100.

Meanwhile, the Illinois State Police and Chicago Police Department are both planning a broader use of cameras. The Chicago police have unveiled a high-tech sport-utility vehicle that can scan the license plates of as many as 3,600 vehicles per hour. The Illinois State Police are also rolling out a new van that will help dispense tickets at a rapid rate. State police estimate that for every ticket a trooper could issue in the traditional manner, the new vans will be able to issue sixteen. ■

NMA Massachusetts Holiday Party by Ivan Sever, Massachusetts State Chapter Coordinator

The Holiday Party of the Massachusetts Chapter was originally cancelled due to a blizzard. However, Friday, January 13th proved to be a lucky day for our rescheduled event.

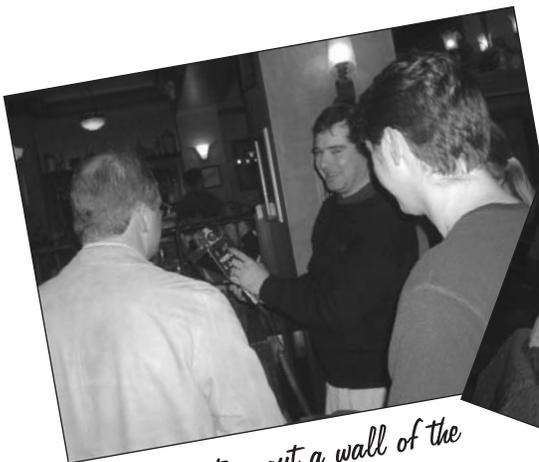
NMA member Scott Downs brought two LIDAR guns. He showed us a video of a LIDAR tracking a car, and pointed out the instances when the

LIDAR's read-out clearly indicated an *increase* in the distance and in the speed of a car, which was continuously approaching. So much for the theory that LIDAR is infallible.

After a social hour, we did some testing in the parking lot and one thing became obvious: The mounting of a LIDAR detector or diffuser is critical.

Unlike radar detectors, if grills and windshield wipers are blocking their view, they will not work correctly.

Overall, the evening was a success and the LIDAR demonstration was not only fun, but very educational. Thanks again, Scott. ■



Scott is pointing out a wall of the pub is moving at 2 mph.



MA NMA members socializing.



Scott is trying to clock Josh Wardell's jammer-equipped MINI.

Putting Laser Jammers To The Test by Josh Wardell, NMA Member

As Ivan mentioned, Scott Downs from Quattro123.com brought two LIDAR guns to the National Motorists Association meeting on Friday. In addition to letting us try out the guns and showing videos of their inaccuracy, we later went out to the parking lot to test them. They were impressive, giving accurate distances of even stationary cars off of any surface, not just reflective plates or headlights. But, we had a very unique opportunity; those of us with LIDAR jammers (or laser shifters or whatever else you want to call them) could finally see just how well they worked first hand.

I had installed my Bel 904 (same as the Escort ZR3) myself about a year ago but since have only come across

one officer with a laser gun, and I was already well below the speed limit, so I had no idea if it was actually working. Furthermore, every inch of my car was covered in dirt and salt, which could certainly make them less effective. We went out to an area of the parking lot where we had a long straight shot, and drove towards the laser gun. Two people had K40 units installed and both of those almost never worked. The other MINI with the Blinder system worked flawlessly. And happily, my unit prevented the gun from getting a reading at all distances. In fact, I was surprised just how far away I was and its jamming was effective, despite the road grime.

An interesting note was that my

dash-mounted radar detector only occasionally rendered a laser alert (of course that is a useless function, they instantly have your speed at that point), illustrating that the beam is small enough to hit your front bumper but not your windshield. The two K40 owners were very upset, as they had them professionally installed. I later spotted their main issue; they were installed far behind the front grills, which blocked their transmission beams. It didn't help that the K40s had very small infrared windows as well. It is astonishing that the installers made this simple mistake. In the end, I was very glad to see both my unit and my installation were worth the investment. ■



News From Around The Country

Alabama

Representative Bill Grimes has once again introduced legislation, H.B. 35, which would authorize the use of red-light cameras. Currently, the legislation is pending in the House Public Safety Committee. Similar camera bills have been pushed almost every legislative session in the past decade. The bill is unlikely to pass.

Florida

Representative Ron Reagan has again sponsored a bill that would allow local governments to install red-light cameras. Fortunately, House Speaker Allan Bense staunchly opposes the measure. With the power to decide which bills will or will not be voted on, the speaker can guarantee that the legislation never makes it to the floor.

Illinois

Elderly motorist Morris Yellen found \$50 on the floor of the Naperville Department of Motor Vehicles. He turned it in, with the understanding that he would get it back if no one claimed it. Instead, the agency put the money in its road fund. His pleas to Secretary of State Jesse White were rebuffed. Finally, after he and his wife contacted a Chicago television station regarding the situation, the state agreed to refund the \$50.

Indiana

State transportation officials are considering fining motorists who cause accidents that lead to traffic jams. Dubbed a "bad driver surcharge," the fee is allegedly intended to curtail traffic-snarling crashes on Indiana's most congested interstates and roads. In reality, it is simply another way for the state to shake down motorists.

Iowa

Last year, Iowa raised its interstate speed limit from 65 to 70 mph. Now, a

state legislator wants to raise the maximum speed limit on secondary roads from 55 to 60 mph. The bill is not without its opponents, who cite both safety and fuel consumption concerns; however, the bill still has the support of several other legislators in Des Moines.

Kentucky

S.B. 103 has passed the Senate Transportation Committee and will soon face a vote before Kentucky's full senate. This legislation would change the statutory speed limit on state highways to 70 mph on interstates and parkways, and 65 mph on other four lane roads (regardless of whether or not they are divided). It would also permit any other speed limit to be raised up to 70 mph on those roads with 55 mph under current law. Governor Ernie Fletcher is supportive of the measure.

Maryland

The House of Delegates and the Senate voted to overturn Governor Robert Ehrlich's veto of a bill that would authorize the use of automated speed cameras in Montgomery County. Lawmakers in the Democrat-controlled General Assembly have overridden vetoes by Republican Ehrlich 13 times this year. That is more vetoes than it overrode during the 16 years of the last two Democratic administrations.

Massachusetts

H.B. 2011, a bill to ban the sale or installation of "an exhaust system that has been modified in a manner which will amplify or increase the noise emitted by the exhaust," was approved by the Massachusetts Joint Transportation Committee. The bill excludes limited-use "antique motor cars," in an attempt to divide automotive enthusiasts. The bill sponsor is convinced this will aid in the measure's passage.

New Jersey

New in 2006, tolls for E-ZPass users on the New Jersey Turnpike will increase by as much as 20 percent during peak travel times. The rate increase is a result of a Turnpike Authority decision to eliminate a long-standing toll discount for E-ZPass users during rush hours.

Tennessee

State troopers who fix tickets as favors—even for someone who gives them gifts—are not breaking the law, according to District Attorney General Randy Nichols. Nichols was appointed by Governor Phil Bredesen to investigate a case in which meat company employees in Knoxville gave hams to troopers, who later fixed tickets for them. Nichols maintains that while Highway Patrol regulations prohibit the practice, it is not technically illegal.

Vermont

Vermont legislators are considering conflicting bills dealing with how the state deals with seat belt violations. A bill introduced by Senator John Campbell would make failing to buckle up a "primary offense" and allow officers to stop motorists for that reason alone. Meanwhile, Senator Mark Shepard has introduced legislation calling for an end to the state's "Click It or Ticket" roadblocks. The NMA's Vermont Activist, Tamika Lovett, has been a prominent voice in this debate.

Virginia

The NMA has been working for months to repeal Virginia's ban on radar detectors. Finally, in January, Delegate Joe T. May introduced H.B. 1120 that would do just that. Unfortunately, the House Transportation Committee tabled it and time has run out for it to be reconsidered. Delegate May has indicated that he may bring the measure up again next year. ■

As of this printing, this information is current. For more information on this and other motorist news, visit www.motorists.org.

William J. Holdorf (1926-2006) by Mark Halter, Wisconsin NMA member

For all who love personal freedom and recognize that freedom is seldom free, the passing of William J. "Bill" Holdorf of Chicago on January 16 came as sad news indeed.

Bill particularly believed motorists should have the right to make their own choice about seat belt use within their own automobiles. Long-time NMA members may recall that for many years, Bill was listed in the *Experts' Corner* of this newsletter as the contact person for seat belt law opposition. Those who followed up on this connection were well-rewarded with information and encouragement.

Bill's database and personal contacts—accumulated over more than two decades—were impressive, a virtual "what's what" and "who's who" within the belt choice movement. Everything was kept organized in a filing system (probably an approach carried over from his career as an office manager for a large company) which was easily accessed when information was requested by people throughout the United States. All provided at Bill's personal expense.

Perhaps more than anyone, Bill recognized the powers he was up against in the struggle to regain belt use choice. He knew of the federal government's use of private corporate dollars to buy seat belt laws. He saw how belt law hearings at state capitols were (and are) routinely orchestrated by special interests. He researched the massive federal expenditures (generally called greenmail) necessary to keep belt-use laws in place at the state level. He dissected belt-use propaganda campaigns and their simplistic slogans. He recognized the collapse of mainstream media reporting on the belt-law issue due to the weight of advertiser pressure coupled with the ideological bent of many editors. He documented that unbelted deaths and injuries were being replaced by belted deaths and injuries with little comment by the public health community.

None of this fazed Bill. He soldiered

on. He mastered the internet at an age when most people have become technophobic (try a Google search for William J. Holdorf). He authored a pioneering article in *Liberty* magazine. His entire series of "Fact-Finder" pamphlets (more than 140) written under the umbrella of the Seat Belt Law Opposition Forum was transcribed for the ABATE of Michigan web site. His work was instrumental in Nedd Karieva's establishment first of Seatbeltchoice.com and then Safetychoice.org. Nedd designated one section of the former as the "Holdorf Highway" in honor of Bill's work.

Bill's efforts live on in his files, which have been preserved. If an accurate history of the origins and effects of belt laws is ever written, these records will be a treasure-trove to researchers.

How fitting that the NMA newsletter was renamed *Driving Freedoms* the very month Bill died. No one showed more drive in trying to regain personal freedom regarding seat belt use than did the graciously unassuming and remarkable Bill Holdorf. ■

Thank You, BMW CCA! by Dan J. Gardner, California Activist

Recently, I had the opportunity to speak to the BMW Car Club of America's Los Angeles chapter. Thanks to Mike Webb and everyone at BMW CCA LA for allowing the NMA to speak about what we're all about. It was a pleasure to have such an interested and engaged group, and we would welcome the opportunity to do it again in the near future. The NMA's staff also informed me that several audience members later joined our organization.

If anyone would like to reach me directly, or if any other local Southern California groups would like to have the NMA speak to their organization, I can be reached via email at dan@aboutgardner.com or by phone at 310-489-3094.

Editor's Note: If NMA members from other states know of a function where they would like an NMA speaker, please contact our office. We would be happy to try to arrange this for you. 608-849-6000 or nma@motorists.org. ■

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The Experts' Corner

If you have a question that only an expert can answer, the NMA can help. The experts here have volunteered to help you. Please mention that you're an NMA member when you contact them.

If you would like to join this list, contact us with your field of expertise, contact address, and preferably a telephone number. This is not intended for listing of commercial business services.

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

<http://www.motorists.org/join/membersonly/experts.html>

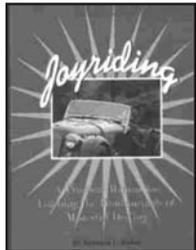
• **Motorist Marketplace** •



Beat Your Ticket

State and local governments are increasingly relying on traffic ticket revenue for daily operations. This book gives responsible motorists the means to protect their rights by addressing many types of tickets: speeding, reckless driving, defective equipment and more. Author David Brown practices law in Monterey, California. This is the latest in a series of books where he is looking out for the driver.

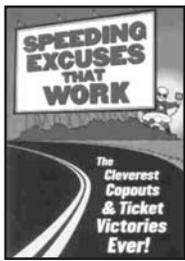
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Joyriding

Described as a "Manual for learning the fundamentals of masterful driving," this book is based on the premise that driving is just about the greatest thing a human being can do. Driving is a skill to be honed and refined into a fine art. And yes, driving is a responsibility with consequences. The author extols the virtues of driving well. He acknowledges the importance of "safety, but correctly points out that safety is a byproduct of being a good and skilled driver.

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Speeding Excuses That Work

This book is a 157-page combination of personal war stories, humor, and ticket avoidance tactics. The book maintains a stream of wit and is an easy read. There's good advice scattered throughout the book, advice that goes beyond talking your way out of a ticket. These topics include avoiding tickets in the first place, safety tips for women involved in traffic stops, and debunking popular myths about traffic tickets.

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Ohio Traffic Tickets Are For The Birds

This book is an extremely detailed manual on how to fight traffic tickets in Ohio (although there are some parts of the book that would apply in other states). Not only does it cover speeding tickets, but it also gives advice on other types of tickets (i.e. tickets based on traffic signs, "right-of-way" tickets, etc). This book includes helpful checklists, statutes, and forms that you will use in preparing your case. If you want to be prepared to fight a traffic ticket of any sort, this book is a great start.

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NMA State Chapter Coordinators and Activists

Dedicated volunteers who monitor, publicize, and lobby critical motorists' issues, for you, within your state. They can also provide insights on how to best fight a traffic ticket in your state.

As an NMA member, the State Chapter Coordinators and Activists are available to you online at <http://www.motorists.org/join/membersonly/sccact.html>

If you are interested
in becoming an
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