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*The NMA Foundation is a non-profit group dedicated to finding innovative ways to improve and protect the interests of North American motorists.*

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**NMA Foundation**

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**Driving Freedoms**

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**Editorial Staff**

- Managing Editor** ..... Aaron Quinn
- Staff Writer**..... James J. Baxter
- Staff Writer**..... Bonnie Sesolak
- Staff Writer**..... Robert Talley

**Cover**

*“Stop Short Yellow Lights Project”*



**Now What?**

*by James J. Baxter, President, NMA*

The election of the ages is over, or so say the pundits, and the new game is “so what’s going to happen now?”

I don’t know what’s going to happen, given the changing political landscape. All I can do is look at a collection of facts, personalities, and events and pontificate on a scene as clear as mud.

First, we have an economic dilemma that rivals and exceeds any we have seen since the 1930’s. Growing unemployment, reduced production, diminishing tax revenues, bankruptcies, huge deficits at the federal level, and state governments staring at mountains of debt. The list could go on, but you have already seen and heard it all.

Next we have a new (not really so new, more like retreads from the 90’s) administration ready to step up to the plate in Washington. I’m fairly confident that it will not be as successful as its supporters would like, nor as bad as its detractors fear.

In terms of NMA interests and concerns, I haven’t noted any “friends of the automobile” being nominated for positions of importance. On the other hand, we certainly aren’t losing any notable advocates with the passing of the existing administration.

As I review disparate issues like photo enforcement, gas taxes, toll roads, speed limits, mass transit, emissions standards, surveillance systems, and congestion I don’t see a clear pattern of evolving policies or actions. I have often said that anyone who supports photo enforcement schemes is either very dumb or very dishonest. Mr. Obama is not dumb. A

majority of voters have high hopes on the second count.

I continue to marvel at the baseless political chant, “our roads and bridges are crumbling, we need a new source of funding, the gas tax isn’t generating enough money to maintain and expand our highways.”

This is one of those situations where you have to ask “how dumb do they think we are?” Who do you suppose is going to pony up those “new sources of funding,” Martians?

The public will not go ballistic if the gas tax is raised to fund *legitimate* and *needed* highway projects. And, if electric vehicles become common place, I’m sure we can find a way to tax the electricity used for transportation purposes.

I’m hoping the rush to lace the country with toll roads will take a hike back to Australia, now that private funding has largely dried up.

This may be a temporary respite, but perhaps it will provide a time out where more rational heads can prevail and put this counter-productive movement back in the can that contains stockades, chastity belts, and the Stamp Act.

The Republicans gave us “55.” The Democrats kept it in place for 22 years. The Republicans repealed “55.” The Democrats are up to bat. Despite the press’ effort to make an issue of the speed limit last summer, neither campaign bit, nor did anyone of consequence in Congress.

Given the administration’s and Congress’ objectives to solve several trillion dollars worth of problems

*(Continued on Page 4)*

## Brand New Speed Trap Exchange Website Launched

After a lengthy development process, we've launched our completely redesigned **Speed Trap Exchange** website ([www.speedtrap.org](http://www.speedtrap.org)), a popular listing of known speed traps across the United States.

Speedtrap.org is the oldest active website on the Internet devoted to exposing unethical law enforcement practices. Over the past decade the website has helped countless drivers avoid unjust tickets by leveraging its extensive database of speed trap listings. And now, after an extensive redesign of the website, the **Speed Trap Exchange** is even more driver-friendly.

Along with a whole new "look," the **Speed Trap Exchange** will include a geographical mapping feature that will allow users to pinpoint the exact location of a speed trap, as well as aid travelers in identifying the location of speed traps on the route they intend to take to their destination.

The new website will continue to offer the opportunity to describe and discuss specific speed traps, as well as rate the

quality of the listing. These discussions are often even more enlightening than the speed trap listing itself and the new speed trap rating system will allow drivers to quickly identify the most egregious speed traps.

While some communities and enforcement agencies object to being included in

the **Speed Trap Exchange**, it's important to note that the **Speed Trap Exchange** was not created to condone reckless or irresponsible driving. The National Motorists Association has long opposed the use of traffic enforcement for the purpose of revenue generation, of which speed traps are the most flagrant example.

The new NMA **Speed Trap Exchange** website is completely free, easy-to-use,

and has proven itself to be very useful for anyone who spends time on the road. You are encouraged to view the listings in your area and add any speed traps that may be missing.

To see what everyone is talking about, check out [www.speedtrap.org](http://www.speedtrap.org). ■



## From The NMA Blog: Satellite-Enforced Speed Limits?

The United Kingdom has always been at the forefront of the enforcement technology craze. Unfortunately, programs that are implemented there – extensive camera enforcement for example – often end up in the United States years later.

That's what makes this excerpt from a recent article in the *The Daily Telegraph* so frightening:

*Drivers could have their speed controlled by satellite to stop them from breaking the limit following a Government trial of new technology.*

*Cars fitted with the system would have their speed automatically monitored by satellites, which would also be programmed with the speed limits for*

*different roads.*

*A motorist who tried to accelerate beyond the speed limit would find the system stopping the car from going any faster or issuing a warning instructing them to slow down.*

*Three types of the technology could be made available.*

*The first, known as "advisory," would stop short of actually slowing the car down and would instead issue a voice alert reminding the motorist what the speed limit is.*

*A second version would either apply the brakes or cut the fuel supply to the engine, slowing it down to the speed limit, but a driver would be able to override the system – either by*

*depressing the accelerator pedal firmly or pressing a button.*

*The third would take over complete control of the car and the driver would not be able to override the system at all.*

*The Department for Transport (DfT) said that the installation of the technology would be voluntary, but it is already in talks with the motor industry over how it could be made available for those who wanted to buy it.*

And by far, the most discouraging part of the article:

*According to a poll carried out for the DfT, 54 percent of motorists would be willing to have the system installed in their car, if it was voluntary. ■*



## NMA Washington Report

by Robert Talley, NMA Lobbyist



President-elect Barack Obama, with a supportive Congress, will have substantially more influence in policy development than his predecessor.

So, what might these policies look like?

On the campaign trail, Senator Obama indicated that investment in transportation would be a priority for his Administration.

The campaign has said that our national transportation infrastructure is critical to national security, natural disaster response, the environment, energy consumption, and our economy.

Mr. Obama also has said he would create a national infrastructure bank. The bank would expand, but not replace, existing federal transportation investments.

Under a plan Obama outlined during his campaign, the independent bank would receive sixty billion dollars in federal funds over ten years. Obama would also look to add additional cash to the fund by capitalizing on investments from the private sector, which has grown increasingly interested in leasing

and operating infrastructure projects like highways and bridges.

Transportation projects could be early recipients of funding. Many transportation projects are ready to go and could promote new jobs in a short time period.

Prior to adjourning for the elections, the House passed legislation providing over twelve billion dollars for new highway and bridge spending. Discussions are underway as to whether to bring this back in late November as part of a second stimulus package.

We can also expect to see a substantial emphasis on the role of density development planning, mass transit and alternative transportation (think bike trails and pedestrian access) as ways to deal with congestion.

What you burn in your car will also be of interest to this Administration. Senator Obama was an ardent supporter of ethanol and is expected to continue to support domestic renewable transportation fuel development. Wildly fluctuating oil prices and persistent assertions of price gouging and price

manipulation will clearly be a topic of consideration in the next two years as well.

Finally, though recently subordinated to fixing the economy, the issue of climate change remains a priority for this Administration.

Transportation, roughly responsible for one-third of the nation's greenhouse gas emissions, will be subject to new emissions restrictions. This could lead to significant changes in what you drive and how much it will cost.

Mr. Obama has not said how he will pay for infrastructure investments. With a mounting federal deficit, increased spending on two unpopular wars overseas and pending crisis over unfunded entitlement liabilities, there are not many options.

Revenues from fuel taxes on gasoline and diesel finance the bulk of the nation's road and rail work. But increased auto fuel efficiency and a decline in American driving have made it clear that the nation needs greater funding if it hopes to continue to finance transportation projects at or above current levels. ■

### Now What?

(Continued from page 2)

(end one war, gear up to win the other war, fix the economy, establish a new healthcare system, revolutionize public education, and find a way to run the country on a couple of gallons of oil) it's plate may be too full to pump for a new national speed limit. However, never underestimate the scope of five

thousand page budget bills that no one ever reads.

The rush to "reduce global warming" seems like a front burner issue. There's talk of "cap and trade" systems (for CO<sub>2</sub>), carbon taxes, and other schemes, all with one final outcome, we're going to pay.

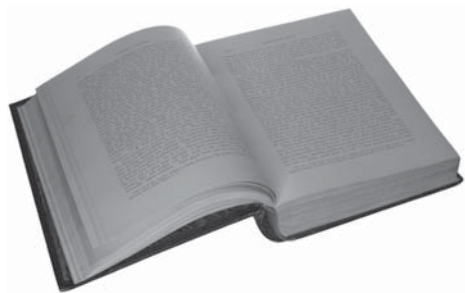
That said, layering on new financial burdens for industry, main street merchants and consumers

while unemployment numbers hit new records, businesses are failing at wholesale rates, and food pantries can't keep up with the demand, suggests the rush may become a retreat. Members of both parties might discover that global temperatures have been declining since 2000.

I guess it's clear, no crystal ball here, we'll just have to take it one day at a time. ■

## Daytime Running Lights Study: No Significant Effect On Safety

By James J. Baxter, NMA President



You're not likely to see any bold headlines, and CNN will not be interviewing Bush administration DOT officials, but the seven-year-long saga of trying to prove that Daytime Running Lights improve highway safety is coming to a close.

The official results are couched in terms like "not statistically significant," meaning they don't prevent crashes or make our highways safer.

The motivation for the study was a General Motors petition to make Daytime Running Lights (DRLs) mandatory on all vehicles sold in the United States. For several years prior to this, GM had been fitting its vehicles with DRLs and expected the masses to respond to this patronizing gesture with their checkbooks open.

Instead, random iconoclasts and other non-believers complained about glare, blanked out directional lights, wasted fuel, and just simple irritation with the DRLs concept. They apparently went elsewhere with their checkbooks and bought cars that allowed the operator to decide when to turn the lights off and on.

Two studies preceded this last effort and they indicated some safety benefit attributable to DRLs. However, the DRL critics were just as relentless in pointing out the flaws and bad assumptions inherent in these studies. The third effort was an attempt to address these earlier failings.

To some degree the last study was an improvement over the prior efforts, but it too failed to address many of the more difficult questions, particularly those questions that suggested DRLs not only did not improve highway safety, rather they detracted from highway safety. Fittingly, the sample population of vehicles investigated in the study were GM products.

Skipping to the final results first, the researchers could find no statistically significant evidence that DRL equipped cars and trucks were less prone to be in accidents where daytime running lights could have been a factor.

Within the study they found random blips where DRL equipped vehicles were disproportionately involved in fewer – or more – accidents than non-DRL equipped vehicles.

This was largely due to small sub-sample sizes where random variations will cause distortions over short time spans. When the subgroups were combined and the number of sample vehicles increased, the differences between DRL and non-DRL vehicles evaporated.

There were primary and basic assumptions made that may not be valid.

For example, the study design was based on the premise that comparing accident involvement of the two types of vehicles; those equipped with DRLs and those not equipped with DRLs would answer the "safety question." However, the concerns raised by DRL critics are only peripherally related to actual accident involvement of DRL equipped vehicles.

It was their contention that DRL equipped vehicles were causing accidents, even though these same vehicles

may not have been involved in the actual accidents.

One such subset of DRL opponents consists of motorcyclists who believe DRL equipped autos and trucks diminished or confused the visibility of motorcycles that typically operate with headlights on during daylight hours. (A Japanese study that explored the effect of daytime headlight use by motorcyclists found no benefit, but that's another topic.)

The correspondingly significant increase in motorcycle accidents has added emphasis to this claim. However, the concurrent increase in motorcycle ownership and use tracks this same increase in motorcycle accidents.

Complaints of "glare," obscured turn signals, confused distance perception ("Is that one headlight close by or two headlights far away?"), and failure to use headlights during periods of low visibility were oft mentioned but not seriously explored.

Issues that were raised in the US, but given short shrift, gathered considerable momentum in some European countries. Namely, does the visual dominance of DRL equipped vehicles mask or obscure pedestrians and bicyclists?

Again, the recent NHTSA study mentioned these possibilities, but did not pursue them. In all fairness this would be a difficult task. Conversely, mandating that millions upon millions of vehicles burn headlights or auxiliary lights during daylight hours is not without considerable cost.

Given the finding of "no statistically significant benefit" in this most recent study it would seem GM could better spend its time petitioning Canada to repeal its DRL mandate. ■

**Ticket Cameras & Text-Messaging**

The city of Scottsdale, Arizona is considering using its ticket cameras to enforce distracted driving laws. Yes, the same cameras that are frequently unable to identify the drivers of vehicles may be used to check for text messaging behind the wheel.

Photo enforcement cameras in Scottsdale are capable of detecting behavior such as text messaging or other distracted driving behavior.

But whether Scottsdale pursues such enforcement as part of a proposed text-messaging and distracted driving law remains to be seen.

"We're able to see people clearly on their cell phones," said Josh Weiss, spokesman for American Traffic Solutions, the company that operates the fixed cameras and camera-equipped vans on Scottsdale surface streets.

Weiss is also a member of Scottsdale's Transportation Commission, which recently voted to recommend that the city adopt a ban on text messaging while driving. ■

**California Toll Road Bailout**

The public agency responsible for operating California's largest network of toll roads is now looking to federal taxpayers for financial help.

The Los Angeles Times reports that the Transportation Corridor Agencies (TCA) has asked the US Department of Transportation for a record \$1.1 billion in TIFIA loan support to avoid collapse. ■

**Ticket Camera Program Corruption**

A former Washington, DC Metropolitan Police Department officer admitted to embezzling \$178,611.87 from the city's lucrative speed camera program.

Karin Coppens, 49, falsified time sheets that claimed she had spent 3400 hours on photo radar duty between 2004 and 2008, either reviewing citations or sitting in a car while the vendor-owned vehicle generated automated tickets. The department pays a fifty-percent overtime salary bonus to employees performing these low-effort tasks. ■



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## Help Us Expose Red-Light Camera Corruption



The National Motorists Association Foundation is organizing a national grassroots effort to publicize and discourage the practice of using traffic signals with short yellow durations as revenue generators at red light ticket camera intersections.

The “Stop Short Yellow Lights” Project ([www.shortyellowlights.com](http://www.shortyellowlights.com)) will prove how widespread and pervasive this practice is.

### What Is The Stop Short Yellow Lights Project?

The NMA Foundation has long known that the exploitation of short yellow light times is a common practice in communities using red light ticket cameras.

The “Stop Short Yellow Lights” Project is designed to identify and publicize the locations where the use of short yellow light timing is being used to bolster ticket camera revenue.

### How Will Short Yellow Lights Be Identified?

Everyday citizens will be the engine that drives this grassroots effort.

To get involved, people near red-light camera installations will simply use a stopwatch to time the length of the yellow lights.

If the yellow light duration appears to be dangerously short, the NMA Foundation will dispatch a trained, objective traffic engineer to confirm the traffic light timing.

Once confirmed, the NMA Foundation will publicize its findings and encourage local officials to take appropriate corrective action. If necessary, legal action may be taken.

### What Does The Duration Of A Yellow Light Have To Do With Accident Prevention?

The positive effect of increasing the yellow light time at a troublesome intersection (an increase of one second can reduce violations by 50 percent) is undisputed by even the most zealous supporters of red-light cameras.

Nevertheless, despite clear evidence that is unsafe to do so, several cities have been caught shortening yellow light times to increase red-light camera profits.

### How Do Short Yellow Lights Increase Red-Light Camera Profits?

Properly timed yellow lights accommodate the normal perception and reaction times of drivers, as well as the time it takes to safely stop or proceed through the intersection.

Deliberately shortening the yellow light duration significantly increases the number of red light violations (and intersection collisions), and thereby the number of citations and revenue are also increased, often dramatically.

Because short yellow lights lead

to increased revenue, the incentive to shorten yellow light times is strong for both the red-light camera vendors and the cities that authorize the use of these devices.

### What Are The Objectives Of The Stop Short Yellow Lights Project?

- Identify locations where short yellow lights are being used at intersections employing red light ticket cameras.
- Publicize these locations and point out dangers of using short yellow lights to boost the revenue from red light ticket cameras.
- Promote state legislation requiring proper minimum standards for yellow light durations.
- Eliminate the use of short yellow lights for any purpose, including revenue generation for corporate or governmental interests.

For more information on the project, please visit [www.shortyellowlights.com](http://www.shortyellowlights.com). ■

## You Can Help!



We've included a sample form with instructions on the next page.





**INSTRUCTIONS:** Choose an intersection with a red light camera. Make 5 attempts at recording the yellow light time in seconds. Then, take the average of the five records to get your final yellow light time. We recommend that you go to an intersection that has no camera on the same road if possible, with the same speed limit. Make 5 attempts there, and average the times for comparison. If you don't have red light cameras in your area or are unable to participate in the project, your financial donation will still enable us to move forward with this project and help fund press releases, traffic engineering studies, and litigation if necessary.

**Location of light (w/camera)** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Posted Speed Limit</b> _____	1 <sup>st</sup> Time _____ sec	2 <sup>nd</sup> Time _____ sec	3 <sup>rd</sup> Time _____ sec
	4 <sup>th</sup> Time _____ sec	5 <sup>th</sup> Time _____ sec	Average _____ sec

**Location of light (w/out camera)** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Posted Speed Limit</b> _____	1 <sup>st</sup> Time _____ sec	2 <sup>nd</sup> Time _____ sec	3 <sup>rd</sup> Time _____ sec
	4 <sup>th</sup> Time _____ sec	5 <sup>th</sup> Time _____ sec	Average _____ sec

Posted Speed (MPH)	Recommended Minimum Yellow Light Times (seconds)
25 or less	3.0
30	3.5
35	4.0
40	4.5
45	5.0
50	5.5
55	6.0

You may copy this form for additional light locations, or access a pdf version on our web site, and submit your results at [www.shortyellowlights.com](http://www.shortyellowlights.com) or mail to: NMA 402 W 2<sup>nd</sup> St. Waunakee, WI 53597

Participant (contact info): \_\_\_\_\_

## Bring Rationality Back To Drunk Driving Enforcement

*This editorial by James Baxter is a response to a five part series on drunk driving in Wisconsin that appeared in the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel in October. For more information on this issue, visit [www.motorists.org/dui](http://www.motorists.org/dui).*

The *Journal-Sentinel* series on “excessive drinking,” primarily related to drunk driving, was motivated by “studies” that identified Wisconsin as the epicenter of drunken behavior and alcohol inspired havoc.

The authors created the illusion of neutrality while pounding home the message that beer, wine, and spirits, and their purveyors, were the leading cause of mayhem on the state’s highways. That the so-called studies have virtually no merit and evolve from the worst of all sources, self-reported behavior, didn’t cause any hesitation in parroting the ludicrous conclusions.

The premise, that Wisconsin has a huge highway safety problem, ranking it the worse in the nation, has one major flaw. It’s not true. Real numbers, real facts, show that Wisconsin has traffic accident fatality rates that are lower than the national average and lower than many states that boast tougher DUI laws.

Wisconsin may not rank high in MADD’s book, but where the rubber hits the road the state has a solid record of highway safety improvement. (In 2006 Wisconsin’s fatality rate was 15 percent below the national average.)

MADD has developed a successful multi-million dollar business model that exploits the human desire for revenge, distorts data for propaganda purposes, and promotes intimidation to coerce uncooperative judges and other public officials.

MADD is supported in this process by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, NHTSA, which favors the use of hyperbole and misleading terminology to justify its actions and programs. (E.G. In 1995 NHTSA told Congress that repealing the national 55 MPH speed limit would cause 6400 additional fatalities. The 55 MPH limit was repealed, but the number of fatalities did not increase and the fatality rate has declined, continually, since that time.)

A good example of the collaboration between MADD and NHTSA is the creation of the deliberately deceptive phrase “alcohol related fatalities.” This includes any fatal accident where one of the people involved had a measurable amount of alcohol in their system. It doesn’t mean that person caused the accident, or that the alcohol was a factor in causing the accident. It just means one of the participants had evidence of alcohol in their system.

This is hardly remarkable when 60 to 70 percent of the adult population (perhaps higher in Wisconsin) consumes beer, wine, and or spirits and that alcohol can remain in their systems for several hours after consuming these beverages.

NHTSA issues a press release that says “Nationally, 13,000 lives were lost in alcohol related crashes.” Soon thereafter MADD picks up the drumbeat and proclaims far and wide that “drunk drivers killed 13,000 people.” MADD then predictably produces a family that has suffered a loss in a DUI incident and implies that they are representative of the typical “drunk driver” victim. The *Journal-Sentinel* series followed the same playbook.

Beyond the estimate that among all the people involved in fatal accidents, 13,000 had alcohol in their

systems, none of this is remotely true.

In the vast majority of cases the only “victim” is the driver himself. A significant percentage of single vehicle, single person fatalities attributed to DUI are in fact suicides, not accidents. In other cases, the at-fault driver was not the person with measurable alcohol present and in yet others, alcohol was not a causative factor.

MADD and the political class persist in stigmatizing the sale and consumption of beer, wine and spirits, in general as well as connected to driving. To the extent that this process is profitable (e.g. donations, sin taxes, fines, fees, surcharges, etc.), it may be rational, albeit unethical.

However, when they move to promoting road blocks for the purpose of intimidation and harassment of the general population, or classifying someone as a felon because they had three drinks and drove a car, or mandating ignition interlock devices, proven to cause more accidents than they prevent, their actions become irrational and corrosive to our welfare and values.

Yes, the social and cultural customs of Wisconsin include the consumption of beer, wine, and spirits and the frequenting of taverns, restaurants, social and sporting events where these beverages are served. As even the *Journal-Sentinel* article gave passing mention, this is largely done in moderation.

And, as official highway statistics show, Wisconsin’s highways are safer than the national average for all states. This is not to say that more cannot be done to reduce impaired driving, of all kinds. But, revenge inspired penalties, intrusive enforcement, and counter-productive mandates are not the direction we should be taking. ■



## News From Around The Country

### Arizona

A yearlong experiment that *lengthened* one traffic signal's yellow light by half a second has dramatically reduced the number of accidents at that intersection. City Councilman Jeff Weninger pushed for the test last year as a condition of his approving expansion of the city's ticket camera program.

### California

The Supreme Court of California agreed to review a lower court decision that shielded the state's red light camera programs. At issue is whether a local government can legally pay a monetary bonus to a private company for each conviction it generates with an automated enforcement program.

### Colorado

In Denver, more than 60 percent of the red-light violations caught by the city's ticket cameras during the first month of operation had to be thrown out. Most of the citations were rejected because the "threshold speed" that helps trigger the cameras was set too low, generating hundreds of false readings.

The speed limit is going up on a section of I-25 in Colorado Springs. State traffic engineers staked out traffic this summer with a radar gun and found 85 percent of cars were going 69 mph. Engineers decided to increase the 55 mph speed limit to 65 mph.

### Delaware

Delaware officials announced Monday that a new punishment will be imposed on motorists accused of not paying tolls. A state law approved in

July empowers police with on-the-spot authority to seize vehicles belonging to anyone whose name appears in a computer database list of toll cheats.

### Kansas

Kansans put the brakes on a proposal to lower the state speed limit from 70 mph to 65 mph. By more than a 5-to-1 margin, Kansas residents oppose the move, according to the dozens of comments received so far by the Kansas Energy Council. The state Energy Council proposed the speed limit reduction as a way to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

### Maryland

Vigilantes painted "SCAM" on the pavement in large, white letters near a speed camera in Potomac, Maryland to warn motorists.

### New Jersey

Red light cameras will not be coming to Parsippany after the town council, in a 4-1 vote, decided against applying to a statewide pilot program.

### Ohio

The Supreme Court of Ohio ruled last month that a momentary drift a few inches over the white line at the edge of the road is sufficient grounds for a police officer to pull over an otherwise safe driver.

The residents of Cincinnati, Ohio made it clear that photo enforcement is not welcome in the city. A majority of voters approved an amendment to the city charter prohibiting local officials from ever installing either red light cameras or speed cameras.

### Pennsylvania

A total of 4390 red light camera tickets, worth \$439,000, will be refunded in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania after a ticket challenge revealed that they were improperly issued.

### Texas

Up to 25 percent of Houston drivers with red-light violations ignore their \$75 fine, resulting in overdue traffic penalties reaching \$7 million. To help the city collect the traffic fees, the Houston City Council plans to coordinate with the Texas Department of Transportation to stop the renewal of car registrations unless the auto owner's fines are fully paid.

### Virginia

A member of the Virginia House of Delegates last week introduced legislation that would create a system to track the driving habits of Virginia motorists, imposing a tax on every mile driven. Delegate David Poisson (D-Loudoun) argues that his measure should be adopted by the legislature's 2009 session because he believes gas tax revenue is dwindling.

### Washington

Tim Eyman's I-985 ballot initiative, which would have removed the financial incentive for cities to install red-light cameras, failed to pass. Under the initiative, all money generated by ticket cameras would have gone into a fund dedicated to reducing congestion. The initiative also would have opened up carpool lanes during off-hours to every driver on the road. ■

As of this printing, this information is current. For more information on this and other motorist news, visit [www.motorists.org](http://www.motorists.org)



## Members Write

I thought it might be wise to remind (or inform) people that using turn signals is actually a law, not an option. I was unaware of this, and as a result got pulled over. I would have to think that many people are similarly unaware of this.

It is no longer about public safety as we know, it is about probable cause and money extraction.

Perhaps a follow-up email or note in the newsletter to remind people to use their turn signals *every* time, especially when driving during the target hours of 12:00 AM and 4:00 AM, would be helpful.

*Jerry Coleman  
Pittsburgh, PA*

Just wanted to say that the September/October issue of *Driving Freedoms* was great. A lot of very useful and timely information. Thanks!

I especially appreciated the blurb about the alternative fueling stations map.

With gas prices bound to go up again I'm thinking more and more of getting a hybrid or one of the non-gasoline using cars so it's good to know where they can be fueled up!

Needless to say, it doesn't look like I'll be getting a hydrogen powered car anytime soon!

*Tolga Morawski  
Fort Plain, NY*

I'd like to agree with many points of Carl Hockett's letter in the July/August edition of *Driving Freedoms*.

DRLs, as they are currently defined, do not achieve the stated goals. But I do want to caution him

(and other California Drivers) about the suggestion he made to "use your running/parking lights."

Under California law, the lights in question are called Parking Lights, *not* Running Lights as Carl suggests (CA Vehicle Code 24801).

Further, it is not legal to drive your vehicle while displaying only parking lights: California Vehicle code section 24800 states that, "No vehicle shall be driven at any time with the parking lamps lighted except when the lamps are being used as turn signal lamps or when the headlamps are also lighted."

I don't know how other states deal with the idea of driving with just the parking lights turned on, but I suggest you check your local laws before engaging in this practice.

*Tom Wood  
Sunnyvale, CA*

### Editor's Note:

*When the federal government formally approved daytime running lights, it overruled state statutes that conflicted with this rule.*

*It may be possible that the California statues prohibiting the use of "parking lights," as running lights, was awarded by the federal law.*

I just recently drove from Colorado to Pennsylvania and you know what? The most insane, crazy,

unsafe driving I witnessed was where the speed limit was set at 55 MPH!

No one has respect for low speed limits. At places where the speed limit was set at 65-75 MPH, people were calm – had better lane respect and much safer driving!

I found more people driving 85-90 in the 55 MPH zone than in the 75 MPH zone.

I kept my speed 3-5 above posted limit and never had a problem until I got to the 55 zone in Pennsylvania on US 22.

Then I had to go with the flow of traffic which was not lower than 70+! The moral of the story is low speed limits do not work!

*Matthew  
NMA Blog Commenter*

### Regarding raising the driving age:

Age has almost nothing to do with driving ability. It is all about experience. My aunt didn't get her license until she was almost thirty! I was sixteen at the time and drove better than she did. She was literally afraid to get behind the wheel.

Avoiding accidents has everything to do with experience and nothing to do with age. Last time I checked, the older you are the harder it is to learn, so maybe the driving age should be lowered.

I'm not a parent yet, but when I am I will be upset if I have to drive my sixteen year old to everything.

*Randall  
NMA Blog Commenter*

Your letters are welcomed and should not exceed 300 words. They may be edited for length or clarity. Full-length articles will also be considered for publication and should not exceed 600 words. Submissions may be emailed to [nma@motorists.org](mailto:nma@motorists.org) or mailed to us.

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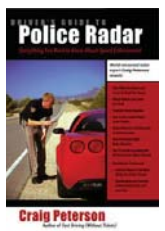
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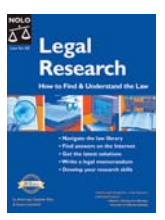
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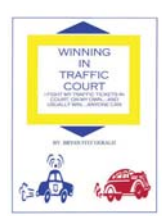
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Mike Valentine:  
Radar fanatic



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**"This is the *only* unit that can track radar and laser in 360 degrees..."** — Popular Science, April, 2006

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*"Best detection range in our tests."*

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Wired, March, 2006

*"This is the only unit that can track radar and laser in 360 degrees, and it can detect multiple threats, helping drivers to better identify false signals."*

Popular Science, April, 2006

*"It's the iPod of the Radar Detectors."*

us.gizmodo.com, December, 2005

*"The only radar detector that works at all is the Valentine One. It shows if the signal is forward, rear, or side, as well as the number of signals."*

Best Life, February, 2007,  
quoting Alex Roy, four-time trophy  
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When Valentine One finds radar or laser, a **red arrow** points toward the source. Ahead? Behind? Off to the side? V1 tells you instantly. Other detectors? They all go "beep" and leave you guessing, just like in the Seventies. Situation Ignorance, in other words.



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