



Driving Freedom

NMA Foundation

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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.



A Roadblock Refresher Course

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5 Court Cases That Paved The Way For Roadblocks

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Driving Freedom

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Driving Freedoms

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Cover
"Roadblock Refresher"



The Onslaught Begins

by James J. Baxter, President, NMA

We knew it was coming and come it has.

State and local governments, all in debt, most in trouble, and few that are willing to make the really hard and legitimate decisions they should be making, are reverting to form.

New taxes, higher taxes, more and larger "user fees," milking federal programs, and gearing up traffic law enforcement to generate serious revenue, preferably though automated enforcement. They have us squarely in their sights.

If your state doesn't have a primary seat belt law, you can be sure the bill has been drafted; the feds pay more money to states with primary belt laws.

No red light ticket cameras in your community? Your local elected officials have already been contacted by ticket camera corporations and they are just looking for the right opportunity to promote this "safety initiative" that, by the way, will cost nothing and generate millions of dollars in revenue.

There's a good chance your state transportation agency is already programming in tens of millions of dollars to be generated by speed monitoring cameras – to make up for the gas tax money being diverted to non-highway purposes.

However, they won't have to rely on speed monitoring devices for long because most of the major roads are going to be converted to toll roads and speeding tickets can be handled through the EZ-Pass system, billed right to your account.

Fines, fees, surcharges, and forfeitures will regularly evolve into

four figure amounts.

This will put more pressure on the courts and they, in turn, will create new ways to diminish due process rights of traffic ticket defendants. No jury trials, no discovery, no requirement for the officer to appear, and no meaningful appeal opportunities.

The actual measures may not be this blunt, the legislature and the courts will just price defendants out of the system with obscene fees.

MADD's on the warpath for more road blocks, ignition interlocks in all cars, higher fines and lower legal BACs, and turning DUI into a felony offense. NHTSA is doing its best to help.

We'll get a token 80 MPH speed limit on a few highways in the middle of nowhere. Meanwhile 10 and 15 MPH speed limits will be established on every road within a mile of a school and enforced with cameras 24/7.

Our every move will be tracked by satellite and GPS so we can be taxed not only by the mile, but also by the time of day, type of highway we're on, community we're in, and the level of congestion around us.

The only force that stands between the scenario I have just described and full blown implementation is YOU.

You are one of the very few people in the whole country who has cared enough to support the NMA. You are one of the very few people who has a grasp of what is happening and knows we need a different direction and a different outcome from

(Continued on Page 4)

Rigged Red Light Camera Robbery!

By Barnet Fagel, NMA Illinois Activist



A recent Chicago Tribune editorial focused on the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) being “encouraged” by the driver’s union to pay their member’s 1,200 red light camera tickets for a total of about \$120,000!

The CTA considered deemed the tickets to be a “bureaucratic nuisance.”

But, what about the rest of the driving public, why don’t we get a ticket pass? We can’t even get a free transfer anymore. It’s not fair nor do I suspect it’s legal to hold one group “above the law” while indiscriminately punishing another equal group for the same offenses.

As I see it, the application of the red light ticket camera technology for nefarious means is the real problem. Hundreds of millions of ticket dollars are a very tempting target, especially when it’s done out in the open and under the “color of authority.”

The red light cameras serve obediently throughout the city, 24 hours a day dutifully snapping license plate pictures which are converted into an ongoing revenue stream that beats to the pulse of the politician’s pocketbook.

No regard or allowances are made for actual traffic requirements, 85th

percentile speed, approach speed, safety perception, mechanical maladies or electronic errors.

Chicago joins the growing list of dubious cities including Chattanooga, TN, Dallas, TX, Springfield, MO, Lubbock, TX, Nashville, TN and Union City, CA who have been caught cheating the public using short yellow lights. The local news outlets put cameras on the problems and aired their city’s selfish and dangerous practices.

If drivers here try to challenge their tickets they are fended off by Chicago’s red light camera ordinance that specifies their violation is administrative, does not add points to a driver’s license, but does not allow any legal challenges except for those specified in the ordinance.

If the driver wants to appeal to a higher court, he or she is met with a \$95 filing fee plus a mandatory trip downtown. There’s no incentive to fight – just pay, pay, pay.

I know the essence of these elements to be true because my car received a red light camera ticket last year.

I reviewed the ticket video on the city’s web site and noticed that besides the missing white stop lines; the amber (yellow) interval seemed very brief for such a wide and busy intersection, especially with multiple left turn lanes.

I then visited the intersection and made a video recording of the offending traffic signals from several points of view. Sure enough, the traffic signals had only a three second yellow signal interval. But I did notice that the white lines had been re-painted.

I did some research and found out that this intersection’s profile should have the federally suggested yellow

signal time of four to four and a half seconds according to normal traffic engineering practices. The yellow signal’s timing was shown to be three seconds on the city’s video evidence.

A second and a half may not seem like a lot, but when a driver is faced with making a “split-second decision” it makes all the difference in the world.

The city’s video evidence clearly showed that my car violated the red light signal by one tenth of a second! I can’t even blink that fast, but that was enough to issue me a ticket.

The city appears to have completely skirted the traffic timing issues by totally ignoring driver response times, vehicle size, laws of inertia, road or visibility conditions – things that unbiased traffic engineers don’t ignore.

When the city chooses to ignore accepted traffic engineering practices and purposely shortens the yellow traffic light timing cycle in spite of the known risks, they knowingly participate in a case of spontaneous legal entrapment. The city can point to all the safety surveys they want, but scrutiny of a majority of this information reveals either tainted data, incomplete information or self-serving financial interests.

I fought my red light camera ticket but got the standard administrative denial in spite of my video and traffic engineering evidence. I was offered the off-handed opportunity to go downtown but I couldn’t justify time or economic investment after I was convinced that no amount of compelling evidence would make my case.

I believe that the City of Chicago “has dirty hands” in the Rigged Red Light Camera Robberies. ■



NMA Washington Report

by Robert Talley, NMA Lobbyist



Transportation spending, privacy, and finding revenues are all on tap in the coming months for Washington discussions.

February brought us a massive stimulus spending package that was supposed to promote “shovel ready” projects. Unfortunately for motorists, competition for the funds was fierce and our national highway system didn’t fare as well as other priorities.

The funds in the stimulus are really just a down payment on the investment needed to improve our infrastructure.

Highway funding continues to be the largest single problem for policy makers in Washington DC. As cars get smaller and the economy slows, gas tax revenues decline, yet each year our needs grow.

Most of the \$48 billion set aside for transportation spending in the federal stimulus bill will go toward

maintaining and upgrading existing roads and rails as opposed to launching ambitious new projects.

To make up this shortfall the government is beginning to cast a wide net for ideas.

Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood recently said he would like to consider taxing drivers based on how many miles they travel rather than how much gasoline they consume.

States are already assessing the idea. Oregon has a pilot program and a North Carolina panel suggested in December the state start charging motorists a quarter-cent for every mile as a substitute for the gas tax. Implementing the idea will require retrofitting vehicles so mileage can be tracked and billed.

Building a national network of satellite transponders to tax every vehicle to raise revenue on a per-mile basis will take time, and states

and localities need money today.

Look no further than your local government or state legislature for more “sin” taxes to balance the budget. Higher license fees, registration fees, increased speeding fines, and our personal favorite, more automated ticket machines could be on the way.

Red light camera companies are pounding the pavement with extra zeal this year, touting the win-win of safety and revenue to city councils, town boards, county commissions and state legislatures knowing they have a strong hand and a weak audience.

Fighting red light cameras requires being armed with the facts and presenting them in a rational manner.

The NMA website has lots of useful information and links to background data that you can use to fight locally against the installation of these fraudulent “safety” devices. ■

The Onslaught Begins

(Continued from page 2)

the authoritarian path we see unfolding. We must start the process of waking up the rest of the population and convincing them that their freedoms, their rights, and their opportunities are being driven away, right down the very highways, roads, and streets they have paid for.

Talk to your friends and family, raise these issues through any channel you can exploit, and let your elected representatives know you will no longer tolerate being screwed by the government that’s supposed to be serving you. ■

Illegal Sign Leads To Dismissed Ticket

A Spring Creek, Nevada man who beat a \$62 ticket has created a legal speed trap that could cost Elko County much more.

James Killian, a civil engineer with the Nevada Department of Transportation, argued the ticket he received in April for going 39 MPH in a 25 MPH zone was unenforceable because the speed limit sign was too small and didn’t comply with uniform traffic codes adopted by the state in 2003. Elko Justice of the Peace Al Kacin agreed, and dismissed the citation.

Now county and Spring Creek Association employees are taking inventory of traffic signs, trying to determine how many may need to be replaced if the local jurisdictions are required to comply with the updated standards.

Killian said he wouldn’t have raised the issue if he had known the unintended consequences of the judge’s ruling. ■

Bernie Madoff & Red Light Cameras

By James J. Baxter, NMA President

For ten years there were credible investigators and investors telling federal regulatory agencies that Bernard Madoff could not be doing what he claimed to be doing, and that in all probability that he was running a Ponzi scheme.

The federal agencies either ignored these accusations or made superficial forays into Mr. Madoff's affairs and accepted his explanations for his claimed prowess as an investor and money manager, serving the famous and wealthy.

I feel their pain.

For ten years we have been telling anyone who would listen that the ticket camera industry is a scam, that traffic signal management is a disaster, and the combination of the two is culminating in a huge rip-off of the driving public. Furthermore, that government greed and the private sector profit motive have teamed up to make our roads less safe by increasing accidents at controlled intersections.

Like Bernie Madoff, these governments and corporations denied our claims and trotted out supposed studies that show ticket cameras to be reducing accidents.

In every instance where a relatively unbiased third party investigated these "studies" they found fraud, manipulation, and outright misrepresentation of the data. The real results verified our claims; Ticket cameras increase intersection traffic accidents.

They do this in two ways:

First, they cause motorists to take unexpected measures, usually abrupt braking, to avoid a traffic ticket. Second, they discourage making improvements to traffic signals, and their operation, if those improvements

will reduce revenue generation from the cameras.

When finally embarrassed to take action, the federal government (the same agency that had been promoting ticket cameras) gathered up a collection of mostly shady or self-serving reports from the same governments already caught cooking the books and reported that overall, ticket cameras improved highway safety (like Bernie Madoff was running a legitimate business).

When told of flaws and omissions in the underlying studies the response was usually silence. (For example, a frequently-cited study from Virginia attributed significant reductions to red light violations and subsequent safety improvements to a ticket camera installation, but "forgot" to mention the improvements occurred after yellow light durations were increased.)

Every independent study of red light ticket cameras has found that they increase intersection accidents. Every study by an institution or government with a vested interest in promoting ticket cameras has been rife with inconsistencies, untenable assump-

tions, and/or outright manipulation to generate pre-ordained results. And, in the latter case they have almost always been caught in the act! Never-the-less the ruse continues.

Local officials claim the cameras are going up to improve safety and catch dangerous red light runners. If outside restraints — say mandated minimum yellow light standards — significantly reduce revenue generation, the cameras come down, safety be damned! (Apparently.)

The overriding question is how many times does it have to be proven that ticket cameras do not improve traffic safety, that they are in fact a detriment to traffic safety, and the only reason governments are installing these systems is to generate revenue from entrapped motorists?

When will the press finally catch on? When will state legislators eliminate the authority that allows local units of government to install and exploit ticket cameras?

Bernie Madoff has been found out, how about turning a little attention to the ticket camera scam, ten years is long enough to ignore this crime. ■

Are you getting the NMA's new weekly email newsletter?

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Safety Is Seldom The Motive In Traffic Enforcement

By Bonnie Sesolak, NMA Development Director

Again we find ourselves choosing the lesser of several evils. In this down economy, the NMA must decide where to focus its efforts.

Growing numbers of lawmakers are opening their eyes to the real motive for photo enforcement, revenue generation. When the ticket camera companies draft clauses into their contracts that forbid cities from increasing the duration of short yellow light times, the motive is obvious; revenue generation.

A study recently published in the *Journal of Law and Economics*, confirms these motives. This study provides statistical evidence that local

governments use traffic enforcement to make up for revenue shortfalls during slow economic times.

However, it should also be noted that once city budgets improve, the increase in ticket writing does *not* go down. Proving again that once these cities get a taste of the green, it's tough to kick the habit.

Our Legislative efforts will continue to focus on photo enforcement. We are making progress.

In Arizona for example, a legislative committee voted 5-2 to approve legislation banning the use of speed cameras on freeways. Adding more fuel to the fire is a citizen sponsored

initiative for a referendum to ban photo enforcement in the entire state.

We need your support. 2009 will be an important year for motorists. Cities and states are under intense pressure to make up for budgets that are in the red.

This will be a year where thousands of proposals for new laws, new penalties, increased fines and increased taxes will flood through state legislatures and city councils.

Your financial support is critical. Please donate to the Legislative Fund, and help us help you. We have included a form below to simplify your donation. Thank you. ■

LEGISLATIVE DRIVE 2009

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Roadblock Refresher: What You Need To Know

Q. Are roadblocks legal?

A. The US Supreme Court has found roadblocks to be legal for a variety of purposes, the most prominent being so-called “sobriety check points.” There is a longer history of roadblock approvals related to checking vehicles near or at national border crossings. However, many state courts take a less favorable view of roadblocks based on language in their respective state constitutions.

Q. Do I have to answer the questions posed to me at a roadblock?

A. You do not have to answer any questions, particularly questions that would be self-incriminating. You may be required (forced by threat of arrest) to show your driver’s license, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance, if the state requires these items to be present in your vehicle.

However, you cannot be compelled to explain your travel plans, divulge the contents of your vehicle, or in any other way converse with law enforcement officers operating a roadblock. You can be polite and courteous to the extent of providing the documents you are required to produce. Beyond that, you can decline to answer any other questions asked.

Q. Can they search my car?

A. Your car can only be searched under the following circumstances:

You voluntarily give the police permission to search your vehicle, the Police have a warrant to search your vehicle, or the police have “probable cause” based on a reasonable explanation of why they believe you have illegal items in your vehicle.

They must be able to explain what they think they will find and why they think said items are in your vehicle. If the police use their authority or force to search your vehicle, against your will, and they do not have a warrant or probable cause to conduct a search, they can be (and should be) held criminally and civilly liable for conducting an illegal search. This holds true even if the search reveals the possession of illegal items.



Q. How long can they keep me at a roadblock?

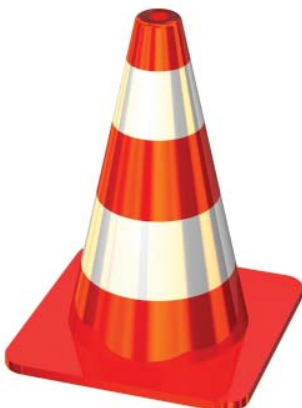
A. One of the consistent rationalizations for roadblocks is that they are minimally intrusive and minimally inconvenient to the motorist. For reasons that escape specific justification, the courts seem to find 15 to 20 minutes the maximum amount of time a motorist can be detained by police before the police take formal action against the motorist or allow the motorist to leave.

However, the courts have placed the burden of forcing the issue upon the motorist. If the motorist does not specifically request to leave, the police can successfully claim the motorist voluntarily remained under their control. Therefore, if the police seem inclined to delay your departure, after they have checked your papers, specifically ask if you may now leave.

If they say “no” you are within your rights to ask for a legitimate explanation for your delay. If no legitimate explanation is forthcoming, you should persist in asking if you may leave. There should be no confusion regarding your intentions and the fact that you are not willingly remaining within control of the police officers.

Q. Can I turn around or turn off to avoid a roadblock?

A. In theory you are allowed to make any legal maneuver, even a U-turn to avoid a roadblock. In reality, the police operating roadblocks deliberately locate them so it is almost impossible to legally avoid them once you become aware of their presence. It is also common practice to hold a patrol car in reserve for the specific purpose of harassing motorists who overtly avoid a roadblock. ■



5 Federal Court Cases That Paved The Way For Roadblocks

The 4th Amendment has been weakened significantly over the years in an effort to allow the use of roadblocks as a law enforcement tool. These five federal court cases were instrumental in that unfortunate process:

1) **US v. Martinez-Fuerte 1976**

This is a border-related case that incrementally increased law enforcement's ability to avoid Fourth Amendment restrictions. The court permits the use of roadblocks several miles inland from national borders under the following rationale:

There aren't feasible alternatives (in their opinion). It is a known and ongoing roadblock so travelers can avoid it if they want to. And, supposedly motorist fear and surprise is minimal because this is an established roadblock with clear evidence of enforcement authority.

These themes will be repeated in subsequent cases as if they are supported by scientific findings, rather than the off-hand personal opinions of court justices, of which they are.

2) **Delaware v. Prouse 1979**

This is the case that pulls together the two themes that have merged in the dispute over when it is permissible to stop motorists without probable cause or reasonable suspicion. The court re-affirmed that individual officers cannot randomly stop motorists, just because they don't have anything better to do with their time. They must have at least reasonable suspicion to stop a vehicle and question the driver.

However, the court volunteered that all the issues that made such random stops "unreasonable" under the Fourth Amendment could be remedied by setting up *formal* roadblocks. This was a loud and clear signal from the court that roadblocks were OK as long as they were organized and systematic in their administration and implementation.

3) **Terry v. Ohio 1968**

This case established three important precedents. Stopping a person through the use of police authority, even though an arrest is not commenced, is a "seizure" for Fourth Amendment purposes. "Patting down" a suspect in search of arms is a "search" for Fourth Amendment purposes.

However, this is the case that determined search and seizure are permissible *without* probable cause. A lesser standard, "reasonable suspicion" will heretofore be considered sufficient to permit search and seizure.

This is a clear departure from the standard that defined the term "reasonable" as it related to the Fourth

Amendment. "Unreasonable" searches and seizures were events that could not be supported by probable cause standards and were therefore unconstitutional. Allowing search and seizure without probable cause was a major emasculation of the Fourth Amendment that has led to the continual erosion of privacy rights.

4) **Brown v. Texas 1979**

Two police officers, while cruising near noon in a patrol car, observed appellant and another man walking away from one another in an alley in an area with a high incidence of drug traffic. They stopped and asked appellant to identify himself and explain what he was doing. One officer testified that he stopped appellant because the situation "looked suspicious, and we had never seen that subject in that area before."

The officers did not claim to suspect appellant of any specific misconduct, nor did they have any reason to believe that he was armed. When appellant refused to identify himself, he was arrested for violation of a Texas statute which makes it a criminal act for a person to refuse to give his name and address to an officer "who has lawfully stopped him and requested the information."

Appellant's motion to set aside charging him with violation of the statute on the ground that the statute violated the First, Fourth, Fifth, and Fourteenth Amendments was denied, and he was convicted and fined.

5) **Michigan v. Sitz 1990**

This is the culmination of three decades of cases that lead to the disintegration of the Fourth Amendment as it applies to motorists, or anyone on public thoroughfares or areas deemed open to the public.

By bringing all the pieces together, the court fashioned a decision based on half-truths, suppositions, baseless opinions and a determined effort to introduce the use of roadblocks as a standard means of controlling human behavior in the United States. There was barely a pretence that roadblocks would "catch" large numbers of drunk drivers.

Here the court repeated its previous findings; roadblocks are a "minor inconvenience," they create minimal fear and apprehension, abusive discretion is minimized by requiring administrative oversight, and by balancing the "benefits" that derive from roadblocks against the infringement of individual rights, the state gains more than the individual loses.

The high profile "drunk-driving problem" was the ideal venue to exercise this decision. ■

Using GPS Technology To Fight Back Against Ticket Cameras

By Bob Morrow, NMA Member



Do you have a Global Positioning System (GPS) device?

They're the latest rage in automotive electronics. My van doesn't have one built-in, so I recently bought a Garmin nüvi 205w.

No longer will I be stuck in traffic in unfamiliar territory due to a wreck on the Interstate, I can get off at the next exit and within a few seconds the Garmin will automatically figure out a new route to my destination. And, no

longer will I cause a wreck by trying to read newspaper-size maps with microscopic print while driving.

The reason I got the Garmin unit was its ability to handle my own "POIs", or points of interest.

A POI is anything on Earth with latitude and longitude coordinates: a business, a favorite trail head, a local fishing hole, or a historic landmark can be POIs. So can red light and stop sign cameras.

Garmin does not hide this ability; they euphemistically refer to such cameras as "safety cameras."

The unit will warn me of red light cameras based on coordinates I enter into a text file.

Here in Montana, the city of Bozeman is going to put up red light cameras this year. By creating a

simple text file, I can enter the latitude and longitude of each RLC-equipped intersection, plus whatever alert text I want.

All I need to know is the names of the streets at the intersection; I don't need to physically visit each intersection because a free computer program called Google Earth can show me the coordinates.

Once uploaded to the GPS unit, it will alert me when I'm within 2/10 of a mile of the offending intersection. It would also work for photo radar, but the photo radar unit needs to be stationary for the GPS unit's alerts to be of any value.

Of course, the better solution is to ban automated image-based traffic law enforcement, but until that day comes, we can enlist the help of technology. ■

Italy's Ticket Cameras Shut Down

Red light cameras are shut down across Italy as the largest ever government investigation into the illegal use of photo enforcement expands.

The inventor of the "T-Red" brand of red light camera, Stefano Arrighetti, 45, was placed under house arrest and another 63 municipal police commanders; 39 mayors and other public officials; and red light camera distributors including Kria, Ci.Ti.Esse, Maggioli, Traffic Technology and Open Software are under investigations. Documents and automated ticketing machines have been seized from 54 municipalities.

Criminal charges of forgery and fraud are based on four basic complaints, many of which represent common practices in the United States.

First, municipalities are accused of shortening yellow times to boost profit. Second, investigators found that municipal police never reviewed the camera fines. The third charge involves fraudulent approval of the red light camera devices themselves. The fourth and most damaging charge involves contracting irregularities. ■

Source: *TheNewspaper.com*

Toll Ban Legislation Introduced

US Representative Glenn Thompson (R-Pennsylvania) recently introduced HR 1071, the Keeping America's Freeways Free Act, which is designed to ban the imposition of tolls on existing interstate highways.

"Tolls are taxes, plain and simple," Thompson said in a statement. "The Interstate Highway System – the greatest public works project in history – was built with federal funding to unite our nation. The Interstate Highway System's profound effect upon the American economy has contributed significantly to development and improved quality of life through increased economic efficiency and productivity. The Keeping Americas Freeways Free Act will preserve this notion and allow for the free flowing of commerce not only in Pennsylvania, but across the nation."

US Representative Ciro Rodriguez (D-Texas) joined as an original co-sponsor of the freeway tolling ban.

It mirrors legislation introduced in the previous Congress by US Senators Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-Texas) and John Cornyn (R-Texas). ■

Source: *TheNewspaper.com*



News From Around The Country

Arizona

An Arizona House panel has learned that Arizona ticket cameras actually are videotaping every car that passes. Governor Jan Brewer doesn't like it. "That was totally news to me and certainly there was an outcry from the people and I certainly was shocked. And I'm looking into that and I'm not comfortable with it at all."

California

The city of San Carlos was caught trapping drivers at an intersection with a yellow time so short that it violated federal and state law. As a result, 411 tickets worth \$156,591 will be refunded or canceled, and San Carlos will pay back the cost of any traffic school that a motorist may have taken to avoid license points. The problem was noticed after a handful of motorists began to complain to the police that the yellow signal lasted as little as 2.9 seconds, in violation of the federal three-second minimum.

Colorado

With municipal budgets tight across the state of Colorado, members of the General Assembly are looking to motorists for relief. The Colorado State Senate Transportation Committee recently voted 4-3 to boost the cost of a speed camera ticket from \$40 to \$75. The measure, Senate Bill 143, also dramatically extends the reach of photo ticketing across the state.

Maryland

Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley wants to raise the age for getting a learner's permit from 15 years and nine months to 16 years old. Drivers would

have to be 16 1/2 to get a provisional driver's license, rather than 16 years and 3 months. And drivers couldn't get a full, "graduated" license until they were 18. The current age is 17 years and nine months. The proposals are part of the governor's legislative goals, which also include using speed cameras in highway work zones and allowing them in local jurisdictions that want them.

Missouri

State Senator Jim Lembke (R-St. Louis County) introduced a measure in January, Senate Bill 211, that would have banned the use of red light cameras in Missouri. Unfortunately, the Senate Transportation Committee voted 7-2 against the bill. The two "yes" votes came from Sen. Delbert Scott (R-Lowry City) and Sen. Dan Clemens (R-Marshfield).

North Carolina

Rocky Mount joined the growing list of North Carolina cities that have dumped red light cameras after the state's highest court insisted that profit from the devices must be given to the public schools. The city recently decided to allow its contract with Traffipax, a German ticket camera operator, to expire without renewal.

Ohio

Cleveland faces a possible avalanche of court challenges to tickets issued by the city's controversial traffic cameras after a lawyer won an unprecedented court ruling. Beachwood lawyer Blake Dickson discovered a loophole in a city ordinance that he believes -- and the 8th Ohio District Court of Appeals agrees -- shields drivers of leased or

rented cars from exposure to the ticket cameras.

Virginia

A bill that was introduced in the General Assembly quietly seeks to eliminate a significant motorist protection built into Virginia's existing red light camera law. House Bill 2416 -- currently in the Transportation Committee -- would delete the phrase "for final approval," eliminating oversight by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) entirely. VDOT's oversight power has already been exercised in turning down proposals by the cities of Virginia Beach and Leesburg as unsafe.

Tennessee

City Judge Earl Porter has dismissed outstanding traffic tickets issued during 2008 by Coopertown police on Interstate 24 or its exits. The town earned a national reputation as a speed trap before tickets issued on the section of I-24 through the burg were challenged last summer. Commuter Jeff Davis successfully argued that the Coopertown Police Department had not obtained permission from the state to patrol the interstate, and so could not legally issue tickets.

Texas

Carrollton officials have scrapped plans to install intersection cameras, saying the number of red light runners doesn't warrant the time and expense to install and operate them. The City Council made implementing a system one of its top priorities starting in 2006, but recent traffic studies showed the city really doesn't need the cameras. ■

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



Members Write

Our country could save *a lot* of fuel if our government would direct and require the installation of “intelligent” traffic control systems.

When dozens of drivers are stopped at a red light while cross traffic is non-existent or very sparse, it reminds me of the tremendous waste of fuel and time imposed on the motoring public throughout the country simply because our traffic control system is inefficient.

No matter how fuel efficient a car may be, they all get *zero* miles to the gallon while stopped at red lights. Existing technology could easily be incorporated to greatly improve the flow of traffic saving *a lot* of fuel, greatly improving traffic flow, and reducing road rage.

Also a thought... many parts of our country have now installed electronic message boards along expressways.

While I certainly embrace the use of seatbelts to save lives, when I see the message board displaying what should be a positive message in a threatening manner like “Click it or ticket,” it aggravates me to see these boards being misused.

Why can't the NMA encourage better use of these message boards for some clearly beneficial purpose like displaying the NMA's message of “Practice proper lane courtesy – Slower traffic keep right”?

Drivers need to be educated that it is *not* their right to poke along in the left lane(s) obstructing the flow of traffic and forcing other drivers to maneuver around them on the right.

*Bob & Cindy Davis
Key Largo, FL*

Greetings all. As soon as I saw the access link to MotorWatch I dialed them up and got some quality info on chassis lube for my old Chevy Tahoe. So nice to have access to a group of fellow auto nuts. This is great. Thanks so very much.

*Ed Orth
Birmingham, AL*

Short yellow lights are nothing new – only the automation of the ticket collection is. Twenty-plus years ago, I was driving in the metro LA area, down one of their very long avenues, with my speed about the speed you need to be able to hit one timed light after another. I had gone through about five, and was entering another using the same estimate of yellow light times. To my surprise, there was a traffic patrol car waiting right there to give me a ticket.

Being a scientist, I wanted to understand what happened. I went and measured the yellow times on the whole series of lights, using the same technique the NMA advocates: make five measurements with a stopwatch and average. Wow! The times were all four seconds on the five I went through, and the one I got the ticket at was set at 2.5 or 3. Mystery solved! I paid the ticket, and have been waiting for all this time for someone to bring public attention to this type of revenue-enhancement trick. Good luck!

*Stan Erickson
Manassas, VA*

I write out of concern that Mr. Coleman in his letter (Nov/Dec 2008 issue) is against the law requiring the use of turn signals. While I am generally against most laws as they are usually ill advised and poorly enforced, the use of turn signals is an important idea.

Failing to signal intention to turn contributes immensely to traffic congestion. We have all waited to turn right into oncoming traffic only to discover that the approaching vehicle is turning into the road we want to exit. That unnecessary delay wastes our time, our fuel, and increases pollution.

Enforcement of the turn signal law would make a lot more sense than enforcing speed limits. Mr. Coleman seems to imply that there is no safety dimension to this issue. I think there is. Although not a major one, it is there nevertheless. Anything that adds to congestion raises tension between drivers, narrows maneuvering opportunity, and generally exacerbates the pressure of driving. I would like to see them rigidly enforced.

About speed limits; in America they are too low, have no consistent relationship to conditions and have little or no correlation with highway safety. Driving has become a convenient place to sleep for most drivers. If they are awake they are drinking coffee, talking on the cell phone and eating.

Raise the speed limit by 20 MPH and everyone would pay attention. Just a thought.

*Mike Denholm
Longview, TX*

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 or mailed to us.

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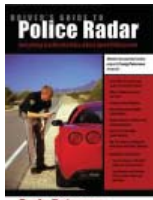
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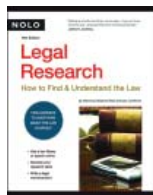
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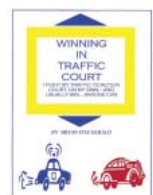
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This book is a helpful, enjoyable read on how to fight a traffic ticket. The author not only explains how to fight a traffic ticket, but also offers amusing anecdotes along with his justification for fighting every ticket you receive.

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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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PC Magazine, April, 2006

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Wired, January, 2007

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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
winner of the Gumball Rally

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.



"In fighter combat, this feature is the difference between life and death." — us.gizmodo.com

Radar Locator tracks one or more radars at the same time; points to each.



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arrows.valentine1.com

GO

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"Awesome...the patented arrows are a huge advantage." — MPH, April, 2006

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