

# SAFETY FOCUS

Published by The National Campaign to Stop Red Light Running



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Volume Six, No.1

January 2007

*This issue focuses on the veto of the anti-camera legislation in Ohio, the results of a new citizen survey on cameras from Canada, a 2007 legislative preview and a review of all pending automated enforcement legislation.*

## Ohio Governor Vetoes Bad Anti-Camera Bill

A grueling two-year fight in the Ohio legislature over the future of automated traffic enforcement cameras ended on Jan. 5th when outgoing Ohio Governor Robert Taft vetoed legislation that had been strongly opposed by a broad coalition of cities and traffic safety organizations.

House Bill 56, if approved, would have effectively prevented a growing number of Ohio communities from using red light and speed limit enforcement cameras by enacting a number of highly-restrictive requirements on the use of the technology.

Taft's veto message said the red light camera bill violated the right of cities and local governments to pass laws affecting their jurisdictions.

"Local governments and their law enforcement agencies have the best knowledge of their streets, including the location of their most dangerous intersections. Along with this knowledge, they must have the ability and flexibility to enforce traffic laws for the safety of all Ohio citizens," Taft said in a statement.

The governor also said the legislation "unjustifiably eliminates the discretion of our locally elected and locally accountable officials in favor of a one-size-fits-all method with essentially unenforceable penalties."

It was Taft's second veto in recent weeks but only the fourth of his eight years in office. The veto was Taft's last official action as the governor of Ohio. Ted Strickland, the incoming governor, said he also would have vetoed the bill.

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(continued from Page 1)

Traffic safety advocates all across Ohio were ecstatic when word of the veto was announced.

“The legislature’s attempt to shut down local traffic safety programs was irresponsible and the Governor’s veto is a victory for public safety over politics. This will allow local governments to continue saving lives and restoring safety and civility on Ohio streets,” said Leslie Blakey, Executive Director of the National Campaign to Stop Red Light Running.

For the past two years, the cities with automated traffic enforcement programs were effectively ignored by both House and Senate lawmakers who drafted the numerous versions of the bill. The bill eventually approved by the legislature had so many restrictive provisions that cities would have been unable to use technology to enforce traffic laws.

“We are extremely relieved that the Governor did the right thing,” said Paul and Sue Oberhauser, red light running survivor advocates from Somerset in Perry County.

"After attending so many hearings on this legislation, it was obvious some of the legislators were going to have to have their own personal experience with a red light running crash before they could understand why this technology is so needed in our communities.”

The legislation was actively opposed by the Ohio cities operating traffic enforcement programs as well as the Campaign, The Ohio Municipal League, The Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, the American Insurance Association, The Ohio Committee on Trauma, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety and several Ohio bicycling and pedestrian advocacy associations.

The results are undisputed: Dayton, which began its project in February of 2003, has seen a 42 percent reduction in crashes at eight intersections monitored by red light cameras. Toledo has seen traffic crashes drop 36 percent since red light cameras were installed.

*The Columbus Dispatch* recently reviewed the six month results from the initial set of red light cameras installed in Columbus.

Among its findings— There has only been one red light running crash at the two intersections equipped with cameras. Previously each intersection has recorded between 5 and 14 crashes per year. Violations also dropped from 1,684 violations in March to 477 in August.

Statewide polling conducted by Zogby International in 2005 found that a majority of Ohioans did not want to see the state legislature restrict the ability of communities to use red light cameras.

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## NOTABLE QUOTES

**“I saw a four-wheel drive slide through a red light at Kansas and Summit Street Friday night. Drivers get a little bit of self confidence because they’re driving a four-wheel drive, but ice is ice and nothing’s going to stop.”**

-- Arkansas City, AR Police Chief Dan Givens discussing the perils of driving on icy streets in a Dec. 4th article in the *Arkansas City Traveler*.

**“It scares me that so many people are running red lights.”**

-- Richardson, TX Asst. Police Chief Jim Spivey quoted in a Dec. 23rd article in the *Dallas Morning News*, describing how three of the city's red light cameras captured over 11,500 violations in just the first nine months of operation.

## New Winnipeg Survey Shows Strong Support For Cameras

The Winnipeg Police Services in Canada recently released the results of their latest citizen poll.

Winnipeg has one of the most extensive red light and speed limit camera enforcement programs in North America.

In stark contrast to the claims of photo enforcement opponents, support for both red light and speed cameras has increased since they were installed.

Support for red light cameras is now 87.9 percent, up from 81 percent before installation.

Approval of photo radar cameras also rose slightly from 82.9 percent compared to 82.3 percent before installation.

Perhaps most telling, approval ratings are even high in households that have received a photo enforcement ticket (84 percent for intersection cameras and 79 percent for speed cameras).

Less than 5 percent of respondents said they wanted less traffic enforcement.

# 2007 State Legislative Efforts Taking Shape

After a 2006 legislative season which saw considerable conflict over red light and speed camera legislation in numerous states, the coming state legislative sessions could be just as combative, but there have been a few encouraging developments in recent months.

In **Alabama**, Sen. Spencer Collier (R) of Mobile intends to author legislation that would authorize the use of red light cameras in Mobile. The bill has been strongly endorsed by the city and comes after a recent independent poll showed strong local public support for red light cameras.

In **Florida**, Rep. Ron Reagan (R) of Sarasota has signalled his intention to again author the Mark Wandall Traffic Safety Act. A record number of communities and counties have asked their legislators to support enabling legislation for red light cameras, and the legislative advocacy efforts have the added benefit of the positive red light camera study conducted in Orlando, Melbourne and Sarasota County in 2006. (see Nov./Dec. edition of *Safety Focus*)

In **Hawaii**, Rep. Joe Souki (D) of Waihee-Wailuku has announced his intentions to again introduce enabling legislation for red light cameras in communities on the island of Oahu. Previous bills have come close to passing, but have come up short. A new positive sign recently reported in the news media is that Rep. Souki has enlisted the support of the chairman of the Senate Public Safety Committee.

In **Missouri**, Sen. Jason Crowell (R) of Cape Girardeau has signalled his intentions to introduce oversight legislation for the growing number of Missouri cities using red light cameras. In 2006, Crowell authored a prohibition bill for red light cameras that was later modified to a standards bill that was not approved by the legislature.

A **New Jersey** bill that would lift the state's prohibition on automated traffic enforcement has been carried over to the 2007 session.

In **Texas**, there are two new potential threats to red light cameras. The first, authored by Rep. Carl Isett (R) of Lubbock, would prohibit the use of red light cameras and is almost identical to legislation he authored two years ago that was never taken up by the Senate. A second bill, authored by Sen. John Carona (R) of Dallas would re-direct all red light camera revenue to the state's trauma centers.

# Red Light Running Tragedy Results In Widespread Outpouring Of Support

A shocking crash on Christmas Eve that killed a mother and two children from the same family has led to a public outpouring of grief for the family from across Utah.

Gary and Cheryl Ceran and their children were returning home from a Christmas Eve presentation of "A Christmas Carol" when police say a driver ran a red light and smashed into their vehicle.

The crash killed 42-year-old Cheryl Ceran, her 15-year-old son Ian and her 7-year-old daughter Julianna. Gary Ceran, the family's father, along with 19-year-old daughter Clarissa and 12-year-old son Caleb were all injured.

The family's loss is only the latest tragedy to befall them, since they had previously lost three children to brain tumors and two to premature birth.

Media reports of the family's plight and the fact that the terrible events unfolded over the Christmas holiday have resulted in wide-ranging offers of support.

A Dec. 31st news article in the *Salt Lake City Tribune* profiled several efforts underway to help the family.

A local theatre raised over \$25,000 through two benefit performances of a play and numerous donations have been made to the family from people across the state who heard about their situation.

Lightstone Studios, a religious-centered producer of music and videos, is sponsoring a benefit concert on Jan. 18th in Lehi, Utah that will feature several popular religious entertainers.

Various media reports since the crash have only focused on the fact that the driver who police say caused the crash appeared to be under the influence of alcohol and was in the country illegally. There has been no indication from the authorities if he will be cited for the initial act of running the red light which caused the tragedy.

A website for the family has been established at [www.ceranfamilyfund.com](http://www.ceranfamilyfund.com)

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## Three Recent Florida Crashes Almost Identical

Three of Florida's most-recent fatal red light running crashes all happened within a span of four days. All the incidents tragically demonstrated what can happen when a vehicle runs a red light and collides with a tractor-trailer.

On Dec. 26th, Daytona Beach police were called to a horrific crash after a Pontiac Grand Am disregarded a red light and struck a semi-truck in an intersection.

The vehicle was wedged under the truck's trailer and burst into flames before the truck's driver and witnesses could attempt to rescue the car's 42-year-old driver.

At almost the exact same time the very next day in the Broward County town of Dania

Beach, police were called to a very similar fatal red light running crash.

According to police reports, a 54-year-old woman disregarded a red traffic light and struck the trailer of a semi-truck in an intersection. In this case, there was no explosion and fire, but the woman was pronounced dead at the scene.

On Dec. 29th, the same scenario unfolded again in Clay County when a 47-year old woman disregarded a red traffic light and struck a semi-truck.

A 15-year-old girl who was a passenger in the car sustained serious injuries and remained hospitalized. Police were still investigating the crash.

# Legislative Update — January 2007

*If there is legislation pending in your state that is not listed here, please contact the Campaign at (202)828-9100 or info@stopredlightrunning.com.*

## RED LIGHT RUNNING SAFETY CAMERAS

**Ohio:** HB 56 (Raussen) would ban the use of automated enforcement technology. The full House approved the legislation on 5/18/05. Referred to the Senate Committee on Highways and Transportation. Hearings were held on 10/18/05, 11/2/05, 3/14/06 and 12/5/06. A 13th substitute version of the legislation was approved on 12/05/06 by the committee and the full Senate approved the legislation on 12/6/06, followed by the House on 12/12/06. **The legislation was VETOED by Gov. Taft on 1/5/07.**

**Texas:** HB 55 (Isett) would prohibit any Texas community from using automated enforcement technology to enforce traffic citations. Would repeal the section of the Texas code that allows for the civil enforcement of traffic violations. The legislation was pre-filed on 11/13/06. No further action.

SB 125 (Carona) would re-direct all revenue generated by Texas red light camera programs to the state general fund for distribution to the state's trauma centers. The legislation was pre-filed on 11/29/06. No further action.

**Virginia:** HB 718 (McQuigg) would authorize the statewide use of red light camera systems by any county, town or city after a public hearing and approval by local elected officials. Cities could place cameras at up to 25 intersections. Pre-filed on 12/10/06. The bill was referred to the House Transportation Committee.

HB 1778 (Cosgrove) would grant localities the authority to operate traffic signal enforcement systems. Localities may install photo-monitoring systems at no more than one intersection for every 10,000 residents at one time. Provisions within the bill limit the use and retention of images recorded and provide other parameters and limitations. Localities are also required to designate at least 50 percent of fines collected for transportation purposes. Pre-filed on 12/28/06. The bill was referred to the House Transportation Committee.

HB 1762 (Purkey) would grant localities the authority to operate traffic signal enforcement systems. Localities may install photo-monitoring systems at no more than 25 intersections at one time. Provisions within the bill set the maximum fine, limit the use and retention of images recorded, and provide other parameters and limitations for localities. Pre-filed on 12/27/06. The bill was referred to the House Transportation Committee.

S 871 (Watkins) would authorize the statewide use of red light camera systems by any county, town or city after a public hearing and approval by local elected officials. Cities could place cameras at up to 25 intersections. Pre-filed on 1/08/07. The bill was referred to the Committee on Local Government.

## SPEEDING SAFETY CAMERAS

**New Jersey:** A2064 (Gusciora) would give the authority to use photo radar to police agencies in localities that have passed authorizing ordinances. Automated violations would be treated the same way as traffic violations issued by patrol officers. Drivers would not be identified in the photographs. The bill was introduced on 1/26/06, approved by the Law and Public Safety Committee on 5/11/05 and amended on the Floor of the Assembly on 5/22/06.

**Pennsylvania:** Rep. George Kenney has announced he will reintroduce his legislation from 2006 to authorize First Class cities in Pennsylvania to establish speed camera programs on state and local highways. The legislation would immediately authorize the placement of speed cameras on Roosevelt Blvd. in Philadelphia. Revenue from fines would be used to construct pedestrian bridges over the boulevard.