

S A F E T Y F O C U S

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Pennsylvania Legislature Gives Philadelphia Red Light Camera Program the Green Light



The Pennsylvania House of Representatives voted 151-49 last week to pass S.B. 238, a bill containing provisions to authorize a red light camera enforcement pilot program in Philadelphia through 2005. The bill now awaits Governor Mark Schweiker's signature. October 5 is the last day for the Governor to act on the legislation. Following the bill's enactment, the Philadelphia City Council will need to pass a city ordinance authorizing the program prior to implementation. The passage of S.B. 238 would make Pennsylvania the 15th state to adopt red light photo enforcement.

State Senator Stewart Greenleaf (R-12) and State Representative George Kenney (R-170) championed the effort, introducing legislation last year to authorize red light camera programs across the state. The Senate version of the legislation received approval from the Senate Transportation Committee in mid June, however, the House Transportation Committee failed to act on the legislation.

House Majority Leader John Perzel (R-172) jump-started the effort by including provisions for a Philadelphia pilot program as an amendment to S.B. 238 – an anti-drunk driving bill that had already passed the Senate and was pending in the House Appropriations Committee. S.B. 238 passed the House with amendments and was ultimately amended once more and passed by the Senate in the final hours before the General Assembly's summer recess. The final House vote to concur with the Senate amendments occurred on Sept. 23.

In 2000, 40 people in Pennsylvania were killed in red light running crashes and another 9,322 were injured. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Pennsylvania is in the top half of all states for red light running fatalities.

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Philadelphia red light camera program

Of the nation's top ten most dangerous intersections identified by State Farm Insurance in 2001, Philadelphia has two intersections in the top three. The legislation directs the city to consider those intersections as well as other dangerous locations in Philadelphia as possible sites for red light camera placement.

Other S.B. 238 red light camera program provisions include:

- Owner liability
- Program administration through the Philadelphia Parking Authority
- A 120-day warning period followed by fines of no more than \$100 for red light running violators
- A requirement for the city to post conspicuous warning signs near intersections where red light cameras are installed to deter would-be violators
- Violations will not be deemed as criminal convictions, will not be reported on a driver's record and will not be subject to merit rating for insurance purposes
- Fines will be used to cover the costs of the program and to develop a transportation enhancements grant program

The program will expire on Dec. 31, 2005.

News summaries from across the nation

Red means business at Decatur crossroads

September 11, 2002

The Atlanta Journal and Constitution

Decatur, Georgia has unveiled a new red light camera program. The program includes a 30-day warning period before citations are issued. Four pictures, two color and two black and white will be taken of vehicles that run red lights. The vehicle's owner will be identified through a photograph of the vehicle's license plate. If the owner is not also the driver of the vehicle, he or she must sign an affidavit identifying the driver. The cameras will not photograph drivers turning on red. The fine for red light running in Decatur is \$70 and citations will be mailed within ten days. During four months of testing prior to the warning period, cameras recorded up to 30 red light running violations a day.

Red-light cameras to be put back into service; Previous program shut down amid controversy

September 18, 2002

The San Diego Union-Tribune

The San Diego City Council voted 8-0 to approve a revised program that allows red light cameras to be turned on again at some San Diego intersections. Traffic engineers say it will be several months before the cameras, which were turned off in June 2001, will be turned back on. The vendor contract has been renegotiated to a flat-fee contract, and traffic lights will be retimed. Crashes jumped 30% at the 19 San Diego intersections with cameras when the cameras were turned off.

Survivor Advocate Spotlight

Ann Sweet is the new National Spokesperson for the National Campaign to Stop Red Light Running. Her column will appear in selected issues of *Safety Focus*.

As a victim advocate, I work to save lives, stop red light running, and comfort those who have experienced the tragedy caused by it. I live in Warsaw, Indiana and work throughout the country to prevent other families from experiencing the same tragedy that devastated mine.

My work with this issue began two years after my daughter Shawnee was killed by a red light runner. Until then, I was like most mothers of three children in their twenties, concerned about college and busily preparing for my only daughter's upcoming wedding. Shawnee was a friendly, well-liked, college graduate with a new job. On October 27, 1997 as she drove behind her fiancé, Jeff, across US 30, a semi-flatbed truck ran the red light and plowed into her car. Jeff was watching in his rear-view mirror as Shawnee's car seemed to explode on impact. By the time he arrived at her side, she was already dead. The truck's driver leapt from his vehicle and ran down the highway away from the horror of what he had done.

Shawnee's death, which occurred in a split-second, had a shattering long-term effect on our family. Her once-healthy 28-year-old brother suffered a severe thyroid stress reaction two weeks after Shawnee's death that confined him to the hospital's intensive care unit. There he suffered congestive heart failure and a collapsed lung. He was not released from the hospital until the day before Christmas.

Jeff, Shawnee's fiancé, did not return to work for seven months, begging to have died in her place. Shawnee's 54-year-old stepfather Ralph, who had been the family's solid foundation throughout the tragedy, suffered a fatal stress-related heart attack three months after Shawnee's death.

Subsequently I have become a traffic safety activist and have founded a grassroots safety organization in Warsaw, Indiana called Focus on Safety. I have compiled traffic studies and have learned everything I can about red light running. I have provided testimony to the Highways and Transit Subcommittee of the United States House of Representatives' Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, sharing my experience and beliefs based on my research on red light running. I testified that for any red light running curtailment program to be successful it must include three important parts: proper engineering, public education, and consistent enforcement including photo enforcement.

With the help of legislators and other organizations, including my role in the National Campaign to Stop Red Light running, I hope to prevent other families from experiencing the pain caused by this preventable crime.

ATTENTION CAMPAIGN MEMBERS

Help us increase awareness of the dangers of red light running by asking anyone who is interested to e-mail us at bplevelich@blakey-agnew.com to be added to our mailing list.

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Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety Seeks SURVIVOR ADVOCATES

WHAT IS THE SURVIVOR ADVOCATES NETWORK?

Since its inception, Advocates has worked with survivor advocates to advance and protect highway safety laws throughout the country. These individuals have suffered the personal consequences of motor vehicle crashes and have decided to work to protect others from the pain they have had to endure. Advocates is building a network of survivor advocates who have either survived a red light running or speed-related crash or lost a loved one in such a crash.

Survivor advocates can be as involved as they desire. No previous advocacy experience is needed, although they will be asked to support legislation expanding the use of red light and/or speed cameras and to speak favorably about photo enforcement. Advocates will work to prepare, assist and even “coach” survivors for advocacy involvement if necessary.

Survivor advocates can choose to write letters to editors of local papers and legislators; testify before legislative committees; serve as media spokespersons; and work with other survivor advocates across the country.

If you know of anyone who has been involved in a red light running or speed-related crash who might be interested in talking with Advocates about our efforts, please contact:

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, Phone: 202-408-1711 Fax: 202-408-1699, E-mail: advocates@saferoads.org. All discussions and information will be kept confidential. Please pass this notice on to others.

Research and Community Action Update

In response to the problem of red light running statewide and the legislature’s failure to pass enabling legislation for red light camera enforcement, the **City of Richardson, Texas** passed a resolution in June supporting enabling legislation in the 2003 legislative session to allow photo red enforcement with a civil penalty. Richardson’s Mayor, Gary Slagel, wrote a letter to other Texas mayors encouraging them to join the effort by passing similar resolutions of support. Richardson also measured red light running violations using three photographic red light enforcement test sites. The test sites demonstrated that one vehicle ran a red light every two minutes in peak periods and every five minutes on an average daily basis in one direction from the intersection. The proposed legislation in Texas requires a rear-view only photograph of the vehicle and registered owner liability.

The National Campaign’s newest publication, ***Stop on Red = Safe on Green: A Guide to Red Light Camera Programs***, includes a model law for red light camera enabling legislation and is available to traffic safety advocates, law enforcement officials and legislators who are interested in learning more about successful implementation of red light camera programs.

Please refer to the Campaign’s website at www.stopredlightrunning.com to obtain the guide in a PDF format or contact Barbara Plevelich at bplevelich@blakey-agnew.com for a hard copy.