

SAFETY FOCUS

Published by The National Campaign to Stop Red Light Running



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Volume Four No.5

June 2005

This issue focuses on the results of the Campaign's success in Texas, recent legislative activities in the Mid-Atlantic and a review of all pending state red light and speed limit photo enforcement legislation.

Texas Senators Reject Anti-Camera Challenge

In a significant victory for traffic safety in Texas, a broad coalition of cities, law enforcement and traffic safety advocates have turned back a concerted legislative effort to strip the ability of Texas communities to use red light cameras for traffic enforcement.

Earlier this session, the Texas House of Representatives approved two pieces of legislation to prohibit any Texas municipalities from using photo enforcement systems, despite the 20 percent reduction in violations that the City of Garland's red light camera program has produced since 2003.

When one of the bills was blocked from receiving a final vote by the Senate, and another languished in a Senate committee, the two main anti-camera legislators tried a last-minute strategy of adding anti-camera wording to a series of larger bills that had to be approved by the legislature before the end of the session.

The last few days of the session saw traffic safety advocates reach out to a series of House and Senate legislators who had been named as conferees to the bills with the anti-camera amendments. Almost daily strategy sessions were held between the Campaign, law enforcement and a number of Texas cities that wanted to preserve their option of adding cameras in the future. Key legislators were contacted and told of the importance of eliminating any anti-camera amendments.

Legislators were also made aware of the results of a poll sponsored by the National Campaign To Stop Red Light Running which showed 65 percent of registered voters in Texas wanted to allow cities to use red light cameras to crack down on drivers who disregard traffic signals.

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Governor Vetoes Maryland Speed Camera Bill

Maryland Gov. Robert Ehrlich has once again rejected legislation which would have allowed the use of speed safety cameras on a limited basis in Maryland.

House Bill 443, which would have allowed speed cameras in Montgomery County residential areas and school zones only, was approved by the Maryland state legislature. Ehrlich vetoed the measure on May 28th citing "Big Brother" concerns and an unsupported claim that speed cameras violate a motorists' right to privacy.

Ehrlich ignored the numerous recent fatal crashes involving teenagers and speeding as well as the findings of several new speed camera research studies from the United Kingdom and France, which have shown substantial safety benefits.

Two years ago Ehrlich vetoed a statewide speed camera law, and does not support Maryland's red light camera programs.

Safety advocates are optimistic that this veto can be overturned in 2006.

Red Light Crash Damages Space Artifact At School

A two-vehicle crash on June 6th injured three people and damaged Titusville, Florida's much loved antique rocket, a prominent local landmark that had just been restored earlier this year.

Apparently, one of the cars ran a red light and the two vehicles collided, causing one to go through the fence surrounding the Titan 1 rocket at the Titusville High School. The car was stopped by a Y-shaped post holding up the rocket's nose cone.

The full extent of the damage to the rocket is not yet known.

The Titan 1, a non-flying dummy rocket, has been in front of the school since 1971. A group called Save the Rocket raised money for several years to refurbish it.

The rocket is actually owned by the Smithsonian and was loaned to the school to honor the community's close ties with the nearby Kennedy Space Center.

Senators Defeat Anti-Camera Challenge

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At the end of the session, it finally became obvious that every anti-camera amendment had been stripped out of every major bill, and that the statutory language that allows Texas cities to use red light cameras to civilly enforce traffic safety had been preserved.

The end result of this advocacy effort is that the City of Garland will almost certainly be joined soon by other Texas cities who have already expressed an interest in using the technology, but were worried that the legislature would ban it.

"It is unfortunate that a few Texas legislators who obviously don't see red light running as a serious problem, made

such a concerted attempt to block cities from trying to prevent the senseless carnage on their streets," said Campaign Executive Director Leslie Blakey, who has testified before the Texas Senate on this issue. "But good judgement and the will of the people have prevailed and cities needing to add this tool to their enforcement efforts can safely do so with additional interference from a few state legislators."

The red light cameras in use in Garland photograph the rear of violating vehicles and drivers are not identified by the photographs. Once a police officer has reviewed the photographs, a civil citation for \$75 is then mailed to the vehicle's registered owner within 14 days.

Virginians Upset About Camera Law Sunset

Seven Virginia communities are now facing a future without red light cameras now that the 1995 law that authorized a 10-year pilot red light camera program is set to expire.

Earlier this year, a broad coalition of traffic safety, law enforcement, municipal government, insurance and medical organizations were unable to prevent a block of rural legislators on the Virginia House Committee on Militia, Police and Public Safety from rejecting all nine House and Senate bills that would have either extended or eliminated the law's sunset or allowed additional Virginia communities to use red light cameras.

Additional language by Senate legislators to eliminate the sunset provision was added to the Senate budget bill, but the Virginia Speaker of the House ruled the measure non-germane to the bill and it was not given a House vote. Gov. Mark Warner later declined to intervene, which means that Virginia's cameras will be turned off at the end of this month.

The legislature's actions went against the primary recommendation of a 2004 study by the Virginia Transportation Research Council which urged the state legislature to extend the camera programs "for at least one year." The study directly credited the cameras with reducing red light running crashes in four Northern Virginia communities, found they reduced red light running violations by 34 percent, and have widespread public support from all across the state.

Seven Virginia communities will soon have to end their red light camera programs, since the law that authorized them expires on July 1st.

**They are:
Alexandria
Arlington County
Fairfax City
Fairfax County
Falls Church
Vienna
Virginia Beach**

The legislature's actions have led to stinging rebukes in several major Virginia newspapers, including editorials in *The Virginian-Pilot* and the Newport News *Daily Press*.

The communities with red light cameras are also voicing their anger at the decision. An Alexandria police spokesperson recently told the *The Washington Times* that the city was planning on keeping their camera infrastructure in place in the hopes that the program would be restored in the near future by the legislature.

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors has announced that they are refusing to remove the red light camera language from the county code as a way to show their displeasure.

NOTABLE QUOTE

"Because of cameras' lifesaving potential, arguments against the idea amount to irritating peripheral noise. They include complaints that a car owner could be mailed a ticket when someone borrowed his car and was photographed running a red light. Response: Next time the owner should think twice about handing over the keys... Opponents also complain that cameras can be abused and turned into a mere money-raising tool for government. Response: That's for local citizens - not the Legislature - to monitor."

- excerpt from a *Dallas Morning News* June 3rd editorial praising the defeat of a push to ban red light cameras in the Texas state legislature.

Mother driven to slow traffic

Reprinted with permission from the Fort Wayne, Indiana Journal Gazette

By Dell Ford

For The Journal Gazette

Ann Sweet doesn't remember anything special about that late October day in 1997. She is certain it wasn't raining. Otherwise, just "a normal October day," she says.

But at 5:15 p.m. on Oct. 27, 1997, a knock at her front door altered her family's life forever.

"Two men showed up on my doorstep," Sweet says slowly, calmly. "The Kosciusko County sheriff and the county coroner. They told me my daughter, Shawnee, was deceased. I told them to go away. I didn't believe them."

It was true. Shawnee, 21 and just weeks away from her wedding day, was dead – killed by a driver who ran a red light at U.S. 30 and Kosciusko County Road 150 West near Warsaw. Seated in the dining room of her spacious rural Kosciusko County home, Sweet, 58 and an 11-year employee of Sprint, where she is in charge of business sales, recalls that before her daughter's death, "I was going along, going along – thinking my life was pretty well in order. Then, a driver who cared more about a few seconds of his time than Shawnee's safety turned my family's life upside down."

That driver, at the wheel of a flatbed tractor-trailer rig hauling two John Deere tractors, ran a red light and hit Shawnee's Pontiac Trans Am as she was crossing U.S. 30. Her fiancé, in a vehicle directly in front of Shawnee, saw the accident in his rearview mirror.

Four months after Shawnee's death, Sweet's husband, Ralph Sweet, died.

For six months after the accident, Sweet says she "slept in a chair in the living room. I kept thinking I needed to be there in case Shawnee and Ralph drove up."

Then, in December 1999, a casual stroll past her TV set brought another change to Sweet's life. On the screen was Dr. Bryan Porter "speaking on a



Ann Sweet

Dean Musser Jr./The Journal Gazette

Tom Brokaw special about red-light running. He and some of his students at Old Dominion University had done a three-year study on drivers who run red lights."

Sweet wrote down "Bryan Porter" and "Old Dominion" and thought nothing more of it until the spring of 2000, when there was another fatality on U.S. 30 near Warsaw caused by a driver running a red light. She found the little piece of paper, called Old Dominion and asked how to get in touch with Bryan Porter.

The TV program and ensuing contact with Porter set Sweet on a mission she doggedly pursues to this day. Her goal: To win state approval for photo enforcement at traffic signals to identify red-light runners.

From the Brokaw special and information sent to her by Porter, Sweet realized red-light running wasn't strictly a U.S. 30 problem "it was a national epidemic."

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Attention Campaign Members!

Do you have friends, family or colleagues who would be interested in receiving our newsletter? Do you regularly forward the newsletter on to others? Help us increase awareness of the dangers of red light running by asking anyone who is interested to e-mail us at info@stopredlightrunning.com and be added to our mailing list.

(continued from page 4)

She also learned 98.8 percent of people believe red-light running is dangerous; 55.8 percent admitted doing it anyway; only 6 percent suffered legal consequences; and “I was in a hurry” is the reason most often given for running a red light. Sweet’s determination to make a difference first put her in touch with the Warsaw Traffic Commission. The response was: “Photo enforcement is a wonderful idea. What can we do?” Kosciusko County commissioners had the same reaction. Sweet called Porter and he told her, “You’ve just begun.” He suggested she go to the Indiana legislature.

Before taking the big leap, however, she contacted then-Sen. Kent Adams, R-Bremen, who “saw value (in photo enforcement). He asked for Attorney General Steve Carter’s opinion on whether the law needed to be changed to accomplish photo enforcement.” The answer was “yes.”

Since 2001, Sweet has worked hard for photo enforcement legislation. It got state Senate approval in 2001, 2002 and 2003 but did not get a hearing in the House; in 2004 the effort was taken to the House first but did not receive a hearing. This year, the Senate gave approval; there was a hearing in the House Roads and Transportation Committee (it passed on an 8-1 vote) but in the full House a vote on photo enforcement failed.

A member of the advisory board of the National Campaign to Stop Red Light Running and its national survivor spokesperson, Sweet’s efforts have been far-flung.

She tells the story of what happened to her family “to anyone who will listen – to get the word out to educate the public that intersections are so very dangerous.”

People listened. In Sacramento, Calif., and San Diego. In St. Louis and Chicago. In Albany, N.Y.; Orlando, Fla.; and Phoenix.

Sweet, who uses vacation time to travel on behalf of traffic safety, claims not to be a public speaker. Nor does she consider herself an extrovert.

“I’m in sales (with Sprint). You’d think I’d be an extrovert. I’m not. I have to push myself to make small talk.”

Pausing a moment to decide what it is that drives her, she says, “I’m objectively focused, I guess you’d say. It’s the same focus I use in safety.” So exactly who is this gentle woman with soft gray eyes and a will of iron? This woman whose five-year push for red-light photo enforcement has fallen short but vows to fight on?

Ann Sweet, the youngest of eight children, grew up on a farm near Silver Lake, a Kosciusko County town with one traffic signal.

“There wasn’t much free time,” she says, recalling she “helped raise the crops ... drove the tractor

with hay bales to the barn.”

A soprano/alto in the Evangelical United Brethren church, she played alto clarinet in the Silver Lake High School concert and marching bands, sang in the school choir and was assistant editor of the yearbook, the Rambler. When she graduated in 1965, she was a member of the National Honor Society and class valedictorian.

Her first job out of high school was office assistant at Oppenheim Department Store in North Manchester. She was with Oppenheim four years. In 1966 she married Dave Ulrey. The couple adopted two boys, Adam, now 35, and Justin, 29. Shawnee was born Sept. 4, 1976.

It took Ann only two years and nine months to receive a degree from Manchester College in 1971. With a double major in history/sociology, she “wanted to do historical research on native American Indians.”

Ann gave up plans to attend graduate school in order for her husband to take graduate work at Ohio Northern University. While living in Ohio, she was a full-time elementary substitute teacher in Athens and the county school system.

When the couple returned to Indiana in 1972, Ann took a secretarial job in Warsaw, fitting her work schedule around her needs to be a mother.

In ensuing years, Ann divorced and married Ralph Sweet. Her life was “going along, going along ...” and then, Shawnee was killed by a red-light runner. There was a civil suit but no criminal charges because, Ann Sweet says, “it couldn’t be proved (the driver) intended to kill Shawnee.”

Sweet finds it hard to understand why anyone would not champion the photo-enforcement bill “when the only people targeted are lawbreakers breaking the law.”

On the seventh anniversary of her daughter’s death, Sweet decided she would not let photo enforcement play such major role in her life. But a friend from Orlando, Fla., called to tell her about a mother walking across a street with her 2- and 5-year-old children.

A 22-year-old driver, talking on a cell phone, ran a red light and killed both little girls. “So,” Sweet says with a sigh, “I got reinvented right away.” Sweet calls herself a “compassionate, caring individual. I really do care ... that other families should not have to go through the same misery my family and I did ... and continue to go through.” Now, the mother who took such pleasure in placing fresh-cut flowers in her daughter’s bedroom when she was alive, now visits her gravesite at Oakwood Cemetery in Warsaw.

“Do you know what I do on holidays ...

Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter ... when other people are opening presents? I’m at Oakwood Cemetery,” Sweet says.

Legislative Update — June 2005

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

Alabama: HB 15 (Grimes) would allow red light cameras for misdemeanor traffic offenses. It was read for a second time before the House on 3/3/05, but was denied a vote and was killed after the 4/3/05 crossover deadline.

SB 200 (Poole) very similar to the House bill. It was awaiting a Third Reading in the Senate Transportation Committee, but was not approved by the 4/3/05 crossover deadline.

Arizona: HB 2119 (Biggs) would waive points if photo enforcement fines paid within 30 days of violation. Died at the end of the legislative session.

HB 2260 (Gray) would require driver identification by photo enforcement systems. Awaiting First Reading in the House. Died at the end of the legislative session.

SB 1326 (Verschoor) would require all photo enforcement programs to have flat fee contracts. Held in Transportation Committee 2/15/05. Died at the end of the legislative session.

SB 1328 (Verschoor) would waive points if photo enforcement fines paid within 30 days of violation. Died at the end of the legislative session.

Connecticut: HB 5744 (Judiciary Committee) would authorize speed and red light cameras in Connecticut municipalities. The bill was approved by four different House committees, but was not given a vote by the June 8th end of session deadline.

Florida: H 1439 (Reagan) would allow counties or cities to establish red light cameras. It was referred to the House Judiciary Committee, where it died at the end of the 2005 legislative session.

SB 2252 (Wise) Senate companion bill to House bill. Referred to Senate Transportation Committee, where it died at the end of the 2005 legislative session.

Illinois: HB 3463 (Cullerton) would expand the use of red light cameras to Illinois cities other than Chicago. Passed the House by a vote of 84-32 on April 13. Referred to Senate Transportation Committee.

Indiana: SB 570 (Mishler) would establish 10 pilot red light camera program cities passed the full Senate by a vote of 31-17, and was approved by the House Transportation and Roadways Committee, but was defeated by a floor vote in the Indiana House.

Nevada: SB 473 would authorize the issuance of traffic citations electronically. Approved by the full Senate on 4/26/05 by a vote of 16-4, referred to House Judiciary Committee, but was not approved by the 5/20/05 deadline for House legislation.

New York: S 139 (Trunzo) would authorize Suffolk County or any municipality within Suffolk County to establish a program imposing owner liability and provide for the installation of red light cameras. Referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Legislative Update — June 2005

Oregon: SB 153 (Metsler) would prevent cities from requiring vehicle owners suspected of running a red light from having to identify people who were driving their vehicles. A red light camera sunset clause has been removed from the bill. Approved as amended by the Transportation Committee on 3/28/05. Sent to Senate Judiciary Committee.

Rhode Island: SB 909 (Goodwin) would authorize statewide use of red light cameras. Referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee. Initial hearing held 3/12/05, subsequent hearing held 6/16/05.

HB 6315 (McCauley) House version of Senate bill. Referred to the House Finance Committee. Initial hearing held 3/13/05.

South Carolina: SB 0040 (Richardson) would allow cities with populations over 20,000 to establish red light camera systems. Approved by the Senate Transportation Committee, but died at the end of the legislative session.

Texas: HB 259 (Elkins) would repeal language that allows civil enforcement of red light running violations. Approved by the House, it was later approved by a vote of 4-2 in the Senate Intergovernmental Affairs Committee, but was blocked from receiving enough votes to be considered by the Senate on 5/12/05.

HB 665 (Isett) would prohibit all photo enforcement programs. It was approved by the House Urban Affairs Committee and the full House, but was not assigned to a Senate committee and died at the end of the legislative session

Utah: A House bill that would have allowed red light cameras was struck down by the House Law Enforcement And Criminal Justice Committee by a vote of 3-6.

Washington: SB 5060 (Haugen) would authorize local jurisdictions to use red light cameras. Passed the Senate on 3/15/05 by a vote of 30 to 19. Referred to the House, passed on third reading by a vote of 61-33 on 4/15/05. **Signed into law on 4/21/05.**

SPEEDING SAFETY CAMERAS

Arizona: SB 1164 (Verschoor) would prohibit photo radar on freeways. Passed by the Senate and narrowly approved by the House. An amendment would have exempted the City of Scottsdale. **Defeated on a final House vote on 4/3/05.**

California: SB 466 (Kuehl) would allow the use of photo radar in residential areas. Amended to only allow enforcement in school zones and residential areas with posted speed limits under 30 mph. Referred back to Senate Transportation and Housing Committee.

Georgia: H 294 (Miller) would authorize the use of speed cameras in school zones from one hour before and until one hour after normal school operations. \$100 civil fine would be imposed. It passed the House, but died at the end of the legislative session.

Maryland: H.B. 443 (Bronrott) would permit the placement of speed monitoring systems on specified roads in Montgomery County. **Approved by state legislature, vetoed by Gov. Robert Ehrlich on 5/20/05.**

Oregon: HB 2364 (Tomei) would expand the use of photo radar technology to the cities of Lake Oswego, Milwaukie and Roseburg. Currently in House Transportation Committee.