

To Whom It May Concern:

As a motorist, a cyclist, a pedestrian and a person strongly committed to the preservation of civil rights (in particular the preservation of privacy rights) I am strongly in favor of legislation allowing municipalities to use automatic cameras to issue citations for red-light violations.

It is a sad fact that many motorists only obey the law to the extent that they feel vulnerable to enforcement; when there is little likelihood that an officer will be present, or that an officer will enforce the law, compliance falls. The widespread use of handheld cell phones on Connecticut roads, despite a state ban, is evidence of this. Perception of enforcement is key; if motorists believe that running a red light will result in an automatic infraction they are much less likely to risk this dangerous behavior.

Many of the concerns raised by opponents of these cameras are grounded in legitimate concerns, but are still weak and unconvincing. For example, some argue that the invasion of privacy is unwarranted. This argument is specious; a record of any individual passing through a particular intersection, triggered only when that person violates a clear traffic signal, is not a significant violation of privacy. With proper oversight by civilian government, this tool holds little potential to be misused, especially as its utility depends on limiting its scope. Additionally, driving is a regulated activity undertaken in a shared public space; no expectation of privacy on a municipal, state, or federal road exists.

The available evidence about the effectiveness of red-light cameras seems to indicate that they are effective. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety conducted evaluations of the cameras in Fairfax, Virginia and Oxnard, California which showed that the cameras reduced red-light violations by 40%. Their research also suggests that this effect carries over even into non-monitored intersections, furthering the effectiveness of the program.

The evidence seems clear that red-light cameras have a tremendous potential to influence driver behavior, save lives, decrease the costs related to traffic-related injuries, and allow municipal police departments to more effectively deploy their officers and other resources. I urge the Connecticut legislature to immediately pass legislation allowing cities and towns to use this technology.

Sincerely,

William Kurtz
419 Washington Avenue
West Haven CT 06516
(203) 931-1875