



**AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION  
of CONNECTICUT**

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Good morning Senator DeFronzo, Representative Guerrera and members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Andrew Schneider, I'm Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union and I am here to express our opposition to Raised Bill 345, authorizing the use of red light traffic cameras, and Raised Bill 346, concerning the installation of speed cameras. These traffic camera bills present major threats to due process and privacy rights.

Presently, when someone receives a traffic violation, the officer who provides the ticket makes the motorist immediately aware of the violation. With red light or speed cameras, however, it may be days or weeks before a person is given notification of a citation. The longer time duration makes it more difficult to recall details and adversely affects the driver's ability to challenge the ticket. How many of us would have difficulty remembering information about driving through intersections just yesterday. In addition, the system is based on the imperfect assumption that the driver of the car and the person to whom the car is registered are one and the same, as tickets are issued based on car registration information. In many instances, of course, this assumption is not true, but the owner of the car will nonetheless be forced to pay. At a minimum, the burden of proof falls on him or her to prove he or she was not driving at the time, turning the basic presumption of "innocent until proven guilty" on its head.

The systems can fail to identify a license plate correctly. For instance, Richard Gregory was falsely accused of running a red light by the City of Dallas. He received a ticket in the mail with photos of a black Acura 32T running a red light nine days before, and according to the ticket, the license plate of the car in the photo matched that of Mr. Gregory. However, Richard Gregory says he has never owned an Acura, doesn't currently have a black car, and was home at home in League City (hundreds of miles away from Dallas) at 7:15 a.m. the morning when the violation occurred. The officer who signed off on the photo-enforced ticket mistook an "N" for an "M" on the license plate and said that Mr. Gregory would have to come to Dallas to prove it wasn't his car.

The ACLU's privacy concern is simple. While the invasion of privacy occasioned by these systems may seem minor, any implementation of a system that leads to widespread installation of cameras throughout the state cannot be ignored or minimized. As surveillance cameras of any kind become more ubiquitous, a further desensitization of privacy rights is inevitable.

Also, camera systems are likely to be abused through mission creep -- that the data collected by these cameras will be used for purposes other than tracking reckless drivers. Government and private-industry surveillance techniques created for one purpose are rarely restricted to that purpose, and every expansion of a data bank and every new use for the data opens the door to more and more privacy abuses.

Similar systems have already been used to invade privacy. For example, cameras installed at the Texas-Oklahoma border were used to capture the license plate numbers of thousands of law abiding persons who were subjected to inquiries about why they were crossing the border.

There are serious questions about whether red light cameras live up to the claims of improved safety. Nationwide studies show red light camera installation causes an 8-81% increase in rear-end collisions and generally fail to prevent more dangerous t-bone collisions, which are caused by drivers so inattentive that a red-light camera presents no deterrent.

The American Automobile Association (or AAA), perhaps the most respected advocate for traffic safety in the country, has widely criticized the use of red light cameras. They called Washington D.C.'s camera program "a shakedown" and said that "it is clear that money and not law enforcement" or safety is the main motivation behind the program. And this seems to be true based on a 2005 study by the *Washington Post* that found despite 500,000 violations and \$32 million in revenue under the 6-year program, crashes at locations with cameras more than doubled, injuries and fatalities climbed 81 percent, and side impact crashes rose 30 percent. AAA has offered a low cost solution to the problem – lengthen the time for yellow lights. One study concluded that simply increasing yellow light times could reduce side impact accidents by up to 90 percent.

Given the dangers of red light cameras and the serious civil liberties concerns of all traffic camera systems, we urge this committee to vote down these proposals. Thank you.