

Philip Blank, Vice-Chair
Milwaukee Safety Commission
4545 West Spencer Place
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53216-2452
(Home phone: 873-6359)

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE, Thursday, Oct. 25, 2001

With Regard to Item 8, file number 010845, a resolution to seek introduction and passage of state legislation authorizing cities of the first class to enact an ordinance permitting the use of traffic photo enforcement systems.

Distinguished chairman, members of the Public Safety Committee and fellow citizens: My name is Philip Blank of 4545 West Spencer Place, and I am vice-chair of the Milwaukee Safety Commission. I appear today on behalf of our chair who is out of town on safety commission related business.

Our membership has discussed the issues involved in the proposed resolution, and we strongly endorse the concept. Red light running is one of the most lethal of motor vehicle violations, and it is rapidly increasing throughout the nation. Just within the past month, my wife and I have witnessed several near accidents due to red light running. In one we were nearly victims save for a swift evasive action on my part. Political entities that have enacted such legislation have curbed these violations, thus saving lives.

Some of our members have discussed this issue with various safety specialists, and we were advised that one prominent state legislator is adamantly opposed to such legislation because of his concern for privacy rights. While I can understand such a concern, there is a way to allay such fears, and that is through informed consent. An example of this is the signs posted at the city limits regarding the prohibition of parking during specific overnight hours in a community. Such a sign stating that red light runners will have their vehicles photographed and the owners ticketed through their license plate information would be one way of notification; or there could be a sign at about 100 yards prior to such a targeted intersection.

Another argument against such legislation is that the ticketed owner may not be the actual driver, which is a valid consideration. However, an auto owner has a responsibility to see to it that the vehicle is in a safe condition for driving on public thoroughfares. It is not a stretch to have them only allow responsible drivers to use their car. If a car owner understands this responsibility, there is less likelihood that such violations will occur; and if they do, it is a matter between the owner and the driver. I am certain that such a law and ordinance could cover these contingencies.

The important fact remains that we wish to protect life and limb. Such legislation would enable police to do other important police work rather than being posted at dangerous intersections where these violations occur.