

## D.C. Cameras Are A Proven Failure

by Eric Skrum, Managing Editor

Proponents of red light cameras (RLCs) have often cited Washington D.C.'s camera program as a good example of the devices' success. In the past six years, the cameras have generated more than \$32 million in fines from over 500,000 violations.

But has there been an increase in safety? Not so, according to a *Washington Post* review. In fact, their analysis shows that intersections with RLCs have had an increase in the number of accidents. The increase is the same or worse than at traffic signals without the devices.

The *Post* even had three independent traffic specialists review this data. Their conclusion was that the cameras are not making any difference in preventing injuries or collisions.

A comparison of accidents at camera intersections before and after

they were installed showed that the number of crashes at locations with cameras more than doubled, from 365 collisions in 1998 to 755 last year. Injury and fatal crashes climbed 81 percent, from 144 such wrecks to 262. Broadside crashes, also known as right-angle or T-bone collisions, rose 30 percent, from 81 to 106 during that time frame.

Douglas Noble, the chief traffic engineer for the D.C. Department of Transportation, could not explain why accidents were up. Noble said that no studies have been conducted on the District's red-light cameras in several years but that he "would not disagree" with the *Post's* analysis.

Despite evidence showing no safety benefit from the cameras, D.C. Police Chief Charles H. Ramsey said that he remains convinced they are worthwhile. "Even if the number of crashes is

not going down," he said, "citations for red-light running have dropped by about 60 percent at intersections that have cameras."

This is the red herring on which camera proponents rely. They claim that just because a certain amount of tickets have been issued at a given intersection, the streets are safer. D.C. is now a perfect example where this does not hold true. Tickets do not lead to safety.

These cameras were specifically installed to "increase safety" at intersections. D.C. officials need to acknowledge that the cameras aren't living up to the promise of the camera manufacturers and should dismantle this program. It is long overdue for D.C. to explore the engineering solutions that have been proven to increase intersection safety.

## Roadblocks Fail To Increase Safety

**A** new release highlights the ineffectiveness of DUI roadblocks. The American Beverage Institute (ABI) studied the latest data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and discovered that the decline in the nation's alcohol-related fatality numbers was almost entirely due to states that didn't resort to the scare tactic of roadblocks.

ABI's analysis found the following:

- Of the 411 fewer alcohol-related deaths in 2004 compared to 2003, 394 were realized by the 11 states that do not operate roadblocks.
- Every one of the 11 non-roadblock states saw a decline in alcohol-

related fatalities, while almost half of the roadblock states saw an increase in alcohol-related fatalities.

- Due to this increase, the 39 states (plus the District of Columbia) that do operate roadblocks only accounted for 17 of the fewer alcohol-related fatalities.

These results reinforce the conclusions of a NHTSA study, which found that "...the number of DUI arrests made by the roving patrol program was nearly three times the average number of DUIs made by the checkpoint programs."

The NMA position is that the only justification for stopping citizens under a roadblock scenario is to warn them of

an unseen peril that could cause injury or death to an unsuspecting motorist. Currently, "sobriety" roadblocks are being used to circumvent the need for probable cause to perform a traffic stop. This is a waste of the police's time and limited resources. Even the Pennsylvania Supreme Court questioned the effectiveness of roadblocks when ruling on the issue of roadblock constitutionality.

Currently, eleven states forbid the use of roadblocks for DUI enforcement (Alaska, Idaho, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming). ABI's analysis emphasizes the need for more states to follow their example. ☺