

Representative Tom Patton
House Bill 207, 208, 209, 210 Sponsor Testimony
House State and Local Government Committee
May 22, 2017

Chairman Anielski, Vice Chair Hambley, and Members of the State and Local Government Committee:

I thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on House Bills 207, 208, 209, and 210. These bills provide reasonable solutions to an ever-growing problem of misuse of local authority.

Please allow me to begin by briefly describing all four pieces of legislation:

HB 207:

Prohibits a municipal corporation or township that does not operate either a fire department or an emergency medical services organization from utilizing traffic law photo-monitoring devices.

HB 208:

Prohibits a local authority with a population of 200 or fewer from utilizing traffic law photo-monitoring devices.

HB 209:

Prohibits a local authority from issuing a total number of traffic tickets from the use of traffic law photo-monitoring devices that exceeds two times the population of the local authority.

HB 210:

Prohibits a local authority from deriving more than 30% of the total annual revenue of the local authority from the issuance of tickets for traffic law violations based on evidence recorded by traffic law photo-monitoring devices.

This abuse in traffic camera ticket issuance is overtly evident in the village of Linndale, located just outside the city of Cleveland. The village has a population under 200 people and is no greater than 52 acres in area. Linndale is notorious for operating traffic cameras, and issuing a large amount of tickets. The misuse of these cameras was not clear to me until we took a closer look at the numbers.

Based on a regular audit produced by Auditor of State, Dave Yost's office, the village of Linndale's general total cash receipts tallied \$565,860 in 2013. Of that \$565,860, \$447,732 came from the issuance of fines, licenses and permits. Nearly 80% of Linndale's total revenue in 2013 was generated via traffic camera tickets. This is clearly an unjust use and abuse in municipal local authority.

Aside from the numbers, this touches a much broader and more important public safety issue that can potentially save lives. When drivers see a police officer on the road they are reminded that they must maintain a safe speed at all times, and if someone is in fact driving recklessly or over the speed limit the police officer is there to witness, pull-over, and ticket that individual. In a village like Linndale the offender would simply receive a ticket in the mail a month or two later, and the offender's illegal behavior would not be apprehended.

Traffic stops have the potential to result in a number of findings such as unregistered weapons, suspended licenses, possession of narcotics, or even stolen vehicles. With the over-employment of traffic cameras these traffic stops simply do not occur. With that said, it is more than reasonably apparent that traffic cameras do not increase public safety, they hinder public safety, and the State of Ohio is letting small local authorities, like Linndale, get away with it.

In closing, I would like to add that traffic cameras have proven to be a nuisance to the public providing zero increase to public safety, and while I understand their purpose in principal, I have yet to see it in practice. A local authority who receives nearly 80% of their annual cash receipts from the issuance of said tickets is simply gaming the system and this issue must be addressed. The aforementioned legislation would achieve exactly that.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope you will join me in supporting this legislation. At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions.