

# Stop and Say Cheese: New Jersey May Ban Controversial Red Light Cameras

by Christina Michelson on June 15, 2012

The legality of red light enforcement cameras is under fire in New Jersey. While the cameras are intended to help police remotely detect violations of traffic control signals, critics contend that they have a minimal benefit on public safety while generating large revenue for New Jersey municipalities. Now, a proposed ban has reignited the debate

Senator Michael Doherty (R-23) has introduced legislation that would prohibit New Jersey municipalities from using red light camera systems to penalize drivers. While its success is the legislature is still unclear, the bill has generated 2,600 signatures of support on an online petition.

In support of the bill, Doherty argues, “There is little if any evidence that the use of red light cameras in New Jersey has reduced the number or severity of accidents at the intersections where they are used. When combined with serious questions regarding personal privacy and the process and constitutionality of being ticketed by a machine, I believe it’s time that we put this ill-conceived red light camera experiment to a rest.”

Doherty points to nine other states that now prohibit the use of red light cameras due to ineffectiveness as well as privacy concerns and other constitutional issues. The New Jersey legislation (Senate Bill S1952) would:

- Ban municipalities that do not currently use red light cameras from buying new systems.
- Prohibit municipalities that currently use red light cameras from renewing their contracts with service providers.
- Eliminate the 90-day window for law enforcement to issue tickets for violations of traffic control devices, such as red light camera systems.

While many oppose red light cameras, safety advocates and law enforcement officials maintain that they are an effective way to deter bad behavior on New Jersey roads. They point to a study conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety that estimates red-light cameras saved 159 lives in 14 U.S. cities over the course of four years.

The bill has been referred to the Senate Transportation Committee. We will, of course, provide updates as they become available.

