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HOUSE BILL NO. 2175

Offered January 14, 2015

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A BILL to amend and reenact § 15.2-968.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to use of photo-monitoring systems to enforce traffic light signals; appeals.

Patrons—Joannou, Cole and Ware

Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 15.2-968.1 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 15.2-968.1. Use of photo-monitoring systems to enforce traffic light signals.**

A. The governing body of any county, city, or town may provide by ordinance for the establishment of a traffic signal enforcement program imposing monetary liability on the operator of a motor vehicle for failure to comply with traffic light signals in such locality in accordance with the provisions of this section. Each such locality may install and operate traffic light signal photo-monitoring systems at no more than one intersection for every 10,000 residents within each county, city, or town at any one time, provided, however, that within planning District 8, each such locality may install and operate traffic light signal photo-monitoring systems at no more than 10 intersections, or at no more than one intersection for every 10,000 residents within each county, city, or town, whichever is greater, at any one time.

B. The operator of a vehicle shall be liable for a monetary penalty imposed pursuant to this section if such vehicle is found, as evidenced by information obtained from a traffic light signal violation monitoring system, to have failed to comply with a traffic light signal within such locality.

C. Proof of a violation of this section shall be evidenced by information obtained from a traffic light signal violation monitoring system authorized pursuant to this section. A certificate, sworn to or affirmed by a law-enforcement officer employed by a locality authorized to impose penalties pursuant to this section, or a facsimile thereof, based upon inspection of photographs, microphotographs, videotape, or other recorded images produced by a traffic light signal violation monitoring system, shall be prima facie evidence of the facts contained therein. Any photographs, microphotographs, videotape, or other recorded images evidencing such a violation shall be available for inspection in any proceeding to adjudicate the liability for such violation pursuant to an ordinance adopted pursuant to this section.

D. In the prosecution for a violation of any local ordinance adopted as provided in this section, prima facie evidence that the vehicle described in the summons issued pursuant to this section was operated in violation of such ordinance, together with proof that the defendant was at the time of such violation the owner, lessee, or renter of the vehicle, shall constitute in evidence a rebuttable presumption that such owner, lessee, or renter of the vehicle was the person who committed the violation. Such presumption shall be rebutted if the owner, lessee, or renter of the vehicle (i) files an affidavit by regular mail with the clerk of the general district court that he was not the operator of the vehicle at the time of the alleged violation or (ii) testifies in open court under oath that he was not the operator of the vehicle at the time of the alleged violation. Such presumption shall also be rebutted if a certified copy of a police report, showing that the vehicle had been reported to the police as stolen prior to the time of the alleged violation of this section, is presented, prior to the return date established on the summons issued pursuant to this section, to the court adjudicating the alleged violation.

E. For purposes of this section, "owner" means the registered owner of such vehicle on record with the Department of Motor Vehicles. For purposes of this section, "traffic light signal violation monitoring system" means a vehicle sensor installed to work in conjunction with a traffic light that automatically produces two or more photographs, two or more microphotographs, video, or other recorded images of each vehicle at the time it is used or operated in violation of § 46.2-833, 46.2-835, or 46.2-836. For each such vehicle, at least one recorded image shall be of the vehicle before it has illegally entered the intersection, and at least one recorded image shall be of the same vehicle after it has illegally entered that intersection.

F. Imposition of a penalty pursuant to this section shall not be deemed a conviction as an operator and shall not be made part of the operating record of the person upon whom such liability is imposed, nor shall it be used for insurance purposes in the provision of motor vehicle insurance coverage. No monetary penalty imposed under this section shall exceed \$50, nor shall it include court costs. *Any finding in a district court that an operator has violated an ordinance adopted as provided in this section shall be appealable to the circuit court in a civil proceeding.*

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59 G. A summons for a violation of this section may be executed pursuant to § 19.2-76.2.
60 Notwithstanding the provisions of § 19.2-76, a summons for a violation of this section may be executed
61 by mailing by first class mail a copy thereof to the owner, lessee, or renter of the vehicle. In the case of
62 a vehicle owner, the copy shall be mailed to the address contained in the records of the Department of
63 Motor Vehicles; in the case of a vehicle lessee or renter, the copy shall be mailed to the address
64 contained in the records of the lessor or renter. Every such mailing shall include, in addition to the
65 summons, a notice of (i) the summoned person's ability to rebut the presumption that he was the
66 operator of the vehicle at the time of the alleged violation through the filing of an affidavit as provided
67 in subsection D and (ii) instructions for filing such affidavit, including the address to which the affidavit
68 is to be sent. If the summoned person fails to appear on the date of return set out in the summons
69 mailed pursuant to this section, the summons shall be executed in the manner set out in § 19.2-76.3. No
70 proceedings for contempt or arrest of a person summoned by mailing shall be instituted for failure to
71 appear on the return date of the summons. Any summons executed for a violation of this section shall
72 provide to the person summoned at least 30 business days from the mailing of the summons to inspect
73 information collected by a traffic light signal violation monitoring system in connection with the
74 violation.

75 H. Information collected by a traffic light signal violation monitoring system installed and operated
76 pursuant to subsection A shall be limited exclusively to that information that is necessary for the
77 enforcement of traffic light violations. On behalf of a locality, a private entity that operates a traffic
78 light signal violation monitoring system may enter into an agreement with the Department of Motor
79 Vehicles, in accordance with the provisions of subdivision B 21 of § 46.2-208, to obtain vehicle owner
80 information regarding the registered owners of vehicles that fail to comply with a traffic light signal.
81 Information provided to the operator of a traffic light signal violation monitoring system shall be
82 protected in a database with security comparable to that of the Department of Motor Vehicles' system,
83 and used only for enforcement against individuals who violate the provisions of this section.
84 Notwithstanding any other provision of law, all photographs, microphotographs, electronic images, or
85 other personal information collected by a traffic light signal violation monitoring system shall be used
86 exclusively for enforcing traffic light violations and shall not (i) be open to the public; (ii) be sold or
87 used for sales, solicitation, or marketing purposes; (iii) be disclosed to any other entity except as may be
88 necessary for the enforcement of a traffic light violation or to a vehicle owner or operator as part of a
89 challenge to the violation; or (iv) be used in a court in a pending action or proceeding unless the action
90 or proceeding relates to a violation of § 46.2-833, 46.2-835, or 46.2-836 or requested upon order from a
91 court of competent jurisdiction. Information collected under this section pertaining to a specific violation
92 shall be purged and not retained later than 60 days after the collection of any civil penalties. If a
93 locality does not execute a summons for a violation of this section within 10 business days, all
94 information collected pertaining to that suspected violation shall be purged within two business days.
95 Any locality operating a traffic light signal violation monitoring system shall annually certify compliance
96 with this section and make all records pertaining to such system available for inspection and audit by
97 the Commissioner of Highways or the Commissioner of the Department of Motor Vehicles or his
98 designee. Any person who discloses personal information in violation of the provisions of this
99 subsection shall be subject to a civil penalty of \$1,000 per disclosure. Any unauthorized use or
100 disclosure of such personal information shall be grounds for termination of the agreement between the
101 Department of Motor Vehicles and the private entity.

102 I. A private entity may enter into an agreement with a locality to be compensated for providing the
103 traffic light signal violation monitoring system or equipment, and all related support services, to include
104 consulting, operations and administration. However, only a law-enforcement officer employed by a
105 locality may swear to or affirm the certificate required by subsection C. No locality shall enter into an
106 agreement for compensation based on the number of violations or monetary penalties imposed.

107 J. When selecting potential intersections for a traffic light signal violation monitoring system, a
108 locality shall consider factors such as (i) the accident rate for the intersection, (ii) the rate of red light
109 violations occurring at the intersection (number of violations per number of vehicles), (iii) the difficulty
110 experienced by law-enforcement officers in patrol cars or on foot in apprehending violators, and (iv) the
111 ability of law-enforcement officers to apprehend violators safely within a reasonable distance from the
112 violation. Localities may consider the risk to pedestrians as a factor, if applicable.

113 K. Before the implementation of a traffic light signal violation monitoring system at an intersection,
114 the locality shall complete an engineering safety analysis that addresses signal timing and other
115 location-specific safety features. The length of the yellow phase shall be established based on the
116 recommended methodology of the Institute of Transportation Engineers. No traffic light signal violation
117 monitoring system shall be implemented or utilized for a traffic signal having a yellow signal phase
118 length of less than three seconds. All traffic light signal violation monitoring systems shall provide a
119 minimum 0.5-second grace period between the time the signal turns red and the time the first violation
120 is recorded. If recommended by the engineering safety analysis, the locality shall make reasonable

121 location-specific safety improvements, including signs and pavement markings.

122 L. Any locality that uses a traffic light signal violation monitoring system shall evaluate the system
123 on a monthly basis to ensure all cameras and traffic signals are functioning properly. Evaluation results
124 shall be made available to the public.

125 M. Any locality that uses a traffic light signal violation monitoring system to enforce traffic light
126 signals shall place conspicuous signs within 500 feet of the intersection approach at which a traffic light
127 signal violation monitoring system is used. There shall be a rebuttable presumption that such signs were
128 in place at the time of the commission of the traffic light signal violation.

129 N. Prior to or coincident with the implementation or expansion of a traffic light signal violation
130 monitoring system, a locality shall conduct a public awareness program, advising the public that the
131 locality is implementing or expanding a traffic light signal violation monitoring system.

132 O. Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, if a vehicle depicted in images recorded by a
133 traffic light signal photo-monitoring system is owned, leased, or rented by a county, city, or town, then
134 the county, city, or town may access and use the recorded images and associated information for
135 employee disciplinary purposes.