

Testimony on SB 744
School Bus Camera
Photo Enforcement

Speaking on behalf of NMA, Campaign for Liberty Texas, TURF, Texans for Toll-free Highways, & We the People - Liberty in Action. This bill is also officially opposed by the RPT (considered overreach).

Photo enforcement systems, just like red light camera ticketing systems, are unconstitutional forms of policing, they fail to make us any safer, and in the case of school bus camera, a solution in search of a problem.

Some reasons for non-willful violations include driver confusion, inconsistent and insufficient flashing yellow warning times, conflicting traffic control devices, and the drivers' line of sight being obscured.

Ethical Challenges of Bus Camera Companies

SB 744 would resurrect photo ticketing scams, & now the same company we chased out of Texas, wants to bring them back - on school buses. Remember the Dallas County Schools scandal that former Senator Don Huffines uncovered? Rickey Dale Sorrells former superintendent with Dallas County Schools was caught taking bribes from Robert Leonard with the school bus camera company and both are in prison today - the very same players who started this school bus camera company that's trying to make its way back into Texas.

Corruption in this industry is widespread. BusPatrol simply is a rebranded version of Force Multiplier Solutions which was involved in the multi-million-dollar bribery scam that bankrupted the Dallas County School system. Verra Mobility (formerly ATS and Redflex), another bus camera vendor, has been accused of stealing BusPatrol's intellectual property to reverse engineer a bus camera ticketing system. This company admitted its strategy to switch to school bus cameras was because 'it's easier to sell to lawmakers.' **Elected officials should seriously consider whether they wish to get into bed with these ethically challenged companies and do their bidding by passing this law.**

Why on earth would you vote allow this back in Texas?

To quote NMA: "This new policing-for-profit scheme is even more insidious than its predecessors, as it claims to protect children. Closer examination of bus

ticketing programs reveals simply another enforcement racket designed to take advantage of driver confusion and engineering flaws to force motorists to pay up.

During the past ten years, there were a total of 4 fatalities to school-aged children involving a driver charged with illegally passing a stopped school bus when the red lights were flashing. With 26 million children riding 480,000 school buses daily, the odds of a child being killed by a driver passing a stopped bus are 1 in 22.75 billion.”

Footage from stop-arm cameras often shows that a large percentage of violations happen as the bus is stopping or after the students have safely boarded. Many violations occur at low speeds, minimizing the risk.

Confusion about school bus stopping laws, inconsistent warning times, and poorly located bus stops suggest that automated school bus ticketing cameras are just another scheme in a long line of abusive revenue generation schemes peddled by automated enforcement companies raking in millions from dubious citations.

Confusion surrounding laws:

One major factor behind frequent violations may be confusion about school bus-stopping laws. Each state has different regulations, adding to the problem, but many drivers don't fully understand the stop-arm rule itself. Some believe they are permitted to slowly pass a stopped school bus

Another issue is that drivers may interpret the flashing red lights and stop signs on a bus the same way they would at an intersection: stop first, then proceed when safe. This inconsistency in how these traffic control devices are used likely contributes to many drivers unintentionally violating the stop-arm rule.

A key issue with stop-arm violations is the warning time drivers receive before the bus activates its red lights and stop arm. Like red-light enforcement, drivers provide consistent warning times for vehicles approaching from different directions and speeds. Inconsistent yellow-light durations lead to unfair tickets. **Many violations happen just as the stop arm becomes active, indicating drivers may not have had enough time to stop safely.**

Economic Hardship

These tickets routinely carry hefty fines and **may result in the loss of driving privileges**. Just one of these tickets could put and keep someone in poverty due to their inability to pay. For the most economically marginalized community members, paying this fine could mean the difference between being able to put food on the table or kids going hungry, or the ability to pay rent. Loss of access to their vehicle could also lead to loss of employment.

SOLUTIONS:

Focusing on driver education, improving bus stop placements, and ensuring adequate warning times would likely be more effective in protecting children without relying on costly and controversial automated enforcement.