

OpEd OPINION

Kearon: School-zone speed cameras are immoral

Updated September 6, 2014 4:00 PM

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A speed camera clocks vehicles traveling southbound on Utopia Parkway near 56th Avenue towards Francis Lewis High School in Queens on Sept. 2, 2014. Photo Credit: Charles Eckert



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Shame on every proponent of school-zone speed cameras. Shame on every public official who has misrepresented the motivation behind the program's implementation. They are municipal revenue raisers, not safety mechanisms.

These cameras will tremendously burden decent, hardworking, financially-strapped Long Islanders, particularly those residents who live near designated schools, and their students and parents -- the most likely victims.

Nassau County residents recently got their first taste of this most offensive of

stealth taxes. Outraged ticket recipients stunned local political leaders, prompting a cancellation of 40,000 summonses totaling \$2.4 million in fines. Nassau officials cited faulty notification and nearly 10,000 wrongly issued summonses as their reasons for dismissing the tickets. Even if every technical issue were resolved tomorrow, the wretched devices would still be an abomination.

A cabal of revenue-hungry state and local officials seized upon speed-camera technology to make life miserable for motorists. The falsehood is that there is a crisis of tragic school-zone fatalities or injuries because of speeding. No statistically meaningful evidence exists to support that view. Another red herring is that the cameras are not so bad because they don't require court appearances or points on the license.

Don't let anyone confuse you: The overriding purpose of these Orwellian devices is to increase revenue by picking the public's pockets. In fact, Nassau County Executive Edward Mangano has said the county could realize \$25 million to \$30 million annually from the cameras. His Suffolk counterpart, Steve Bellone, projects \$6.8 million a year from 46 cameras when Suffolk's program kicks off early next year. Funds from another 23 speed zone cameras on the East End will go to those municipalities. Assertions that speed-camera funds would help pay for police raises or other legitimate law-enforcement purposes do not address the fundamental unfairness and disproportionate financial impact on motorists.



Nassau

Back to school zone speed cameras

The law of unintended consequences will inevitably apply as these cameras will cause more accidents than they prevent, when startled motorists slam on brakes upon seeing speed camera warnings. That is if motorists manage to see the warning signs: Let's see whether they are posted so prominently that no driver could fail to notice them. If they are, there would be less objection, but the revenue intended would never be generated.

It is difficult to articulate the creepy loss of privacy and enjoyment of the roads the cameras will cause. Suffice it to say that Long Islanders will be at the mercy of these technologically flawed, government-sanctioned behavior monitors.

How long before such clever thinkers see no reason to exempt the Long Island Expressway and every other road on Long Island from speed cameras? Good luck trying to put this genie back in the bottle. Nassau and Suffolk residents are doomed to suffer these indignities unless the public pushes back.

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