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September 28, 2012

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GOVERNOR GREEN LIGHTS SIMITIAN'S RED-LIGHT CAMERA REFORMS

SACRAMENTO – Today, Governor Jerry Brown signed a bill to keep the public safe and protect the rights of drivers by regulating red-light cameras.

Senate Bill 1303, by State Senator Joe Simitian (D-Palo Alto), would establish statewide standards for the installation and operation of traffic enforcement cameras, and make it easier to challenge unjustified tickets.

Senate Bill 1303 protects drivers' rights by:

- Requiring that camera locations be based solely on safety considerations;
- Specifically prohibiting the use of red-light cameras to raise revenue;
- Requiring cities and counties to follow state standards in the placement and operation of cameras;
- Requiring adequate signs to notify drivers when red-light cameras are in use;
- Prohibiting so-called "snitch tickets" (i.e., an innocent ticket recipient may not be required to identify another driver in order to clear an inaccurate ticket); and
- Making it easier for a wrongfully ticketed driver to get a ticket cleared.

"I am extremely pleased that the Governor has signed this bill, which will help restore public confidence in the use and fairness of red-light cameras," Simitian said. "Red-light cameras can be an important public safety tool, but they shouldn't be abused. This bill will establish important ground rules, ensure that if drivers get a ticket that they shouldn't have, they can contest the ticket easily. It will put driver safety, rather than the revenue, first."

"We can keep the public safe, and still give California drivers a fair shake," Simitian said.

"Private companies operating red light traffic enforcement cameras don't just slap drivers with high fines. The contracts they sign with cities are often so focused on high profits that they can literally be dangerous – by prohibiting smart safety measures like lengthening yellow lights," said Emily Rusch, state director of CALPIRG, which supported the bill. "We applaud Governor Brown for signing SB 1303, which will ensure that sensible taxpayer and public safety protections are part of any new contracts with private red-light camera companies."

The cameras have been a subject of debate in cities around the state, as drivers have questioned their accuracy.

In addition, SB 1303 clarifies recent confusion as the result of conflicting court cases by specifying that evidence from red-light cameras is not hearsay, and can be used as evidence in court.

This legislation is a reintroduction of Senate Bill 29 by Simitian, which passed out of the Senate on a 38-0 vote in 2011 but was vetoed by Governor Brown. In his veto message, Brown indicated that he felt local elected officials should oversee the use of red-light cameras.

"I'm very pleased that we were able to get to 'yes' this year on this bill," Simitian said.

The idea for the bill originated in Simitian's annual "There Oughta Be a Law" contest. San Jose resident Vera Gil suggested the legislation after receiving multiple tickets from red-light cameras for a car in Southern California that she does not own and never has driven.

Based on the difficulty she experienced challenging the tickets, Gil proposed a law requiring improved policies and procedures for clearing wrongly issued red-light camera citations.

After researching the issue, however, Simitian concluded that "Vera Gil's experience was just the tip of the iceberg. The entire system cried out for reform."

Most of the provisions of the bill take effect January 1, 2013.

For more about SB 1303, visit <http://www.senatorsimitian.com>.

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