

1 HB815
2 120433-2
3 By Representatives Salaam and Thomas (J) (N & P)
4 RFD: Local Legislation
5 First Read: 06-APR-10

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ENROLLED, An Act,

Relating to the City of Selma, Alabama, in Dallas County; authorizing automated traffic light enforcement in the City of Selma, Alabama, as a civil violation; providing certain procedures to be followed by the city using automated photographic traffic light enforcement; providing that the owner of the vehicle involved in running a traffic light is presumptively liable for a civil violation and the payment of a civil fine, but providing procedures to contest liability; providing for jurisdiction in the Selma Municipal Court over the civil violations and allowing appeals to the Dallas County Circuit Court for trial de novo; and creating a cause of action for any person held responsible for payment of the civil fine against the person who was actually operating a vehicle during the running of a traffic light.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. (a) This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Selma Red Light Safety Act."

(b) The City of Selma, Alabama, may, by ordinance, adopt the procedures set out in this act.

Section 2. The Legislature finds and declares the following:

1 (1) Accident data establishes that vehicles running
2 red lights have been and are a dangerous problem in Selma,
3 Alabama.

4 (2) Studies have found that automated traffic camera
5 enforcement in a municipal area is a highly accurate method
6 for detecting red light violations and is very effective in
7 reducing the number of red light violations and decreasing the
8 number of traffic accidents, deaths, and injuries.

9 (3) Current Alabama law provides that failing to
10 stop and remain stopped at a traffic-control signal which is
11 emitting a steady red signal is a criminal misdemeanor. Under
12 Alabama law one who commits such a misdemeanor is subject to
13 prosecution only if the misdemeanor was witnessed by either a
14 duly empowered police officer or other witness who makes a
15 verified complaint to a sworn magistrate.

16 (4) Many jurisdictions have adopted laws that allow
17 use of automated photographic traffic enforcement, and the
18 Legislature finds that it should adopt legislation
19 implementing a program for automated photographic enforcement
20 of traffic signal violations, which the Legislature finds is
21 consistent with this act.

22 (5) By allowing a program for use of automated
23 traffic cameras in traffic signal enforcement by the City of
24 Selma, the Legislature hopes to both decrease the rate of
25 traffic signal violations and learn more about the

1 effectiveness and fairness involved in the use of the
2 automated systems.

3 Section 3. As used in this act, the following terms
4 shall have the following meanings:

5 (1) CIRCUIT COURT or COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT. The
6 Dallas County Circuit Court.

7 (2) CITY. The City of Selma, Alabama.

8 (3) CIVIL FINE. The monetary amount assessed by the
9 city pursuant to this act for an adjudication of civil
10 liability for a traffic signal violation, including municipal
11 court costs associated with the infraction.

12 (4) CIVIL VIOLATION. There is hereby created a
13 noncriminal category of state law called a civil violation
14 created and existing for the sole purpose of carrying out the
15 terms of this act. The penalty for violation of a civil
16 violation shall be the payment of a civil fine, the
17 enforceability of which shall be accomplished through civil
18 action. The prosecution of a civil violation created hereby
19 shall carry reduced evidentiary requirements and burden of
20 proof as set out in Section 6, and in no event shall an
21 adjudication of liability for a civil violation be punishable
22 by a criminal fine or imprisonment.

23 (5) OWNER. The owner of a motor vehicle as shown on
24 the motor vehicle registration records of the Alabama
25 Department of Revenue or the analogous department or agency of

1 another state or country. The term shall not include a motor
2 vehicle rental or leasing company when a motor vehicle
3 registered by the company is rented or leased to another
4 person under a rental or lease agreement with the company, in
5 which event "owner" shall mean the person to whom the vehicle
6 is rented or leased; nor shall the term include motor vehicles
7 displaying dealer license plates, in which event "owner" shall
8 mean the person to whom the vehicle is assigned for use; nor
9 shall the term include the owner of any stolen motor vehicle,
10 in which event "owner" shall mean the person who is guilty of
11 stealing the motor vehicle.

12 (6) PHOTOGRAPHIC TRAFFIC SIGNAL ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM.

13 A camera system which is designed and installed to work in
14 conjunction with an electrically operated traffic-control
15 device using vehicle sensors synchronized to automatically
16 record, either by conventional film or digital imaging,
17 sequenced photographs or full motion video of the rear of a
18 motor vehicle while proceeding through a signalized
19 intersection. The device shall be capable of producing at
20 least two recorded images, at least one of which is capable of
21 clearly depicting the license plate of a motor vehicle that is
22 not operated in compliance with the instructions of the
23 traffic-control signal.

24 (7) TRAFFIC-CONTROL SIGNAL. Any device, whether
25 manually, electrically, or mechanically operated, by which

1 traffic is alternately directed to stop and permitted to
2 proceed as defined in Section 32-1-1.1, Code of Alabama 1975.

3 (8) TRAFFIC SIGNAL VIOLATION. Any violation of
4 Section 32-5A-31, Section 32-5A-32, or Section 32-5A-35, Code
5 of Alabama 1975, or of any combination thereof, wherein a
6 vehicle proceeds into a signalized intersection at a time
7 while the traffic-control signal for that vehicle's lane of
8 travel is emitting a steady red signal. A traffic signal
9 violation shall be a civil violation as defined in this act.

10 (9) TRAINED TECHNICIAN. A sworn law enforcement
11 officer employed by the City of Selma, who alternatively:

12 a. Is a professional engineer in the field of civil
13 engineering.

14 b. Has received instruction and training in the
15 proper use of the photographic traffic signal enforcement
16 system to be used by the city by the city's traffic engineer
17 or his or her designee.

18 c. Has been trained by the vendor installing the
19 equipment. Under no circumstances shall the salary or other
20 compensation of the trained technician be related to the
21 number of notices of violation issued or amount of fines
22 collected.

23 Section 4. (a) The city is empowered to utilize an
24 automated photographic traffic signal enforcement system to
25 detect and record traffic signal violations, to issue notices

1 of civil violations by mail, and to prosecute civil violations
2 for the recorded traffic signal violations which may occur
3 within the corporate limits of the city as provided in this
4 act. A civil fine assessed under this act shall not exceed one
5 hundred dollars (\$100), and municipal court costs shall be
6 assessed only in contested cases in the same manner and in the
7 same amounts prescribed for a municipal criminal
8 traffic-control device violation prosecuted as a misdemeanor
9 under Sections 32-5A-31, 32-5A-32, 32-5A-35, Code of Alabama
10 1975, or any combination thereof. An additional fee of ten
11 dollars (\$10) shall be added to the municipal court costs
12 authorized to be collected in connection with notices issued
13 under this act. Court costs collected pursuant to this act
14 shall be distributed in the same manner as prescribed by law
15 for the distribution of municipal court costs for misdemeanor
16 violations. The additional ten dollars (\$10) authorized by
17 this act shall be paid to the Alabama Criminal Justice
18 Information Center as compensation for record keeping with
19 respect to violation notices issued under this act.

20 (b) The city shall cause a sign to be posted at each
21 of a minimum of five roadway entry points to the city to
22 provide motorists with notice that photographic traffic signal
23 enforcement systems are in use. The sign will comply with this
24 requirement if it states substantially the following:

1 "AUTOMATED CAMERAS USED IN RED LIGHT ENFORCEMENT," or if it
2 otherwise gives sufficient notice.

3 (c) Prior to operating a photographic traffic signal
4 enforcement system, the city shall make a public announcement
5 and conduct a public awareness campaign of the use of a
6 photographic traffic signal enforcement system a minimum of 30
7 days before using the devices. The city may place photographic
8 traffic signal enforcement systems at locations without public
9 notice of the specific location, may change locations without
10 public notice, and may install and move as needed decoy
11 devices designed to resemble photographic traffic signal
12 enforcement systems.

13 (d) The city shall post a sign or signs at each
14 intersection at which a device is located informing motorists
15 that a photographic traffic signal enforcement system is in
16 operation at the intersection.

17 Section 5. (a) Prior to imposing a civil penalty
18 under this act, the city shall first mail via first class
19 United States mail a notice of violation to the owner of the
20 motor vehicle which is recorded by the photographic traffic
21 signal enforcement system while committing a traffic signal
22 violation. The notice shall be sent not later than the 30th
23 day after the date the traffic signal violation is recorded
24 to:

1 (1) The owner's address as shown on the registration
2 records of the Alabama Department of Revenue.

3 (2) If the vehicle is registered in another state or
4 country, to the owner's address as shown on the motor vehicle
5 registration records of the department or agency of the other
6 state or country analogous to the Alabama Department of
7 Revenue.

8 (b) A notice of violation issued under this act
9 shall contain the following:

10 (1) Description of the violation alleged.

11 (2) The date, time, and location of the violation.

12 (3) A copy of recorded images of the vehicle
13 involved in the violation.

14 (4) The amount of the civil penalty to be imposed
15 for the violation.

16 (5) The date by which the civil penalty must be
17 paid.

18 (6) A statement that the person named in the notice
19 of violation may pay the civil penalty in lieu of appearing at
20 an administrative adjudication hearing.

21 (7) Information that informs the person named in the
22 notice of violation:

23 a. Of the right to contest the imposition of the
24 civil penalty in an administrative adjudication.

1 b. Of the manner and time in which to contest the
2 imposition of the civil penalty.

3 c. That failure to pay the civil penalty or to
4 contest liability is an admission of liability.

5 (8) A statement that a recorded image is evidence in
6 a proceeding for the imposition of a civil penalty.

7 (9) A statement that failure to pay the civil
8 penalty within the time allowed shall result in the imposition
9 of a late penalty not exceeding twenty-five dollars (\$25) for
10 each month after the issuance of the order imposing the civil
11 penalty.

12 (10) Any other information deemed necessary by the
13 department.

14 (c) A notice of violation under this act is presumed
15 to have been received on the 10th day after the date the
16 notice of violation is placed in the United States mail.

17 (d) The civil penalty imposed shall be paid within
18 30 days of the 10th day after the date the notice of violation
19 is mailed.

20 (e) It shall be within the discretion of the trained
21 technician to determine which of the recorded traffic signal
22 violations are prosecuted based upon the quality and
23 legibility of the recorded image. In lieu of issuing a notice
24 of violation, the city may mail a warning notice to the owner.

1 Section 6. (a) The municipal court is vested with
2 the power and jurisdiction to hear and adjudicate the civil
3 violations provided for in this act, and to issue orders
4 imposing the civil fines and costs set out in this act.

5 (b) A person who receives a notice of violation may
6 contest the imposition of the civil fine by submitting a
7 request for a hearing on the adjudication of the civil
8 violation, in writing, within 15 days of the 10th day after
9 the date the notice of violation is mailed. Upon receipt of a
10 timely request, the city shall notify the person of the date
11 and time of the adjudicative hearing.

12 (c) Failure to pay a civil penalty or to contest
13 liability in a timely manner is an admission of liability in
14 the full amount of the civil fine assessed in the notice of
15 violation.

16 (d) The civil fine and court costs shall not be
17 assessed if, after a hearing, the municipal court judge enters
18 a finding of no liability.

19 (e) If an adjudicative hearing is requested, the
20 city shall have the burden of proving the traffic signal
21 violation by a preponderance of the evidence. The reliability
22 of the photographic traffic signal enforcement system used to
23 produce the recorded image of the violation may be attested to
24 by affidavit of a trained technician. An affidavit of a
25 trained technician that alleges a violation based on an

1 inspection of the pertinent recorded image is admissible in a
2 proceeding under this act and is evidence of the facts
3 contained in the affidavit.

4 (f) The notice of violation, the recorded and
5 reproduced images of the traffic signal violation, regardless
6 of the media on which they are recorded, accompanied by a
7 certification of authenticity of a trained technician, and
8 evidence of ownership of a vehicle as shown by copies or
9 summaries of official records shall be admissible into
10 evidence without foundation unless the municipal court finds
11 there is an indication of untrustworthiness, in which case the
12 city shall be given a reasonable opportunity to lay an
13 evidentiary foundation.

14 (g) All other matters of evidence and procedure not
15 specifically addressed in this act shall be subject to the
16 rules of evidence and the rules of procedure as they apply in
17 the small claims courts of this state, except that on any
18 appeal to the circuit court for trial de novo the evidence and
19 procedures shall be as for any civil case in the circuit court
20 except as otherwise provided in this act.

21 (h) A person who is found liable for the civil
22 violation after an adjudicative hearing or who requests an
23 adjudicative hearing and thereafter fails to appear at the
24 time and place of the hearing is liable for court costs and
25 fees set out herein in addition to the amount of the civil

1 fine assessed for the violation. A person who is found liable
2 for a civil violation after an adjudicative hearing shall pay
3 the civil fine and costs within 10 days of the hearing.

4 (i) Whenever payment of a civil fine is owed to the
5 city, the amount of the civil fine as set by ordinance may not
6 be increased, decreased, or remitted by the municipal court,
7 and the liability may be satisfied only by payment.

8 (j) It shall be an affirmative defense to the
9 imposition of civil liability under this act, to be proven by
10 a preponderance of the evidence, that:

11 1. The traffic-control signal was not in proper
12 position and sufficiently visible to an ordinarily observant
13 person.

14 2. The operator of the motor vehicle was acting in
15 compliance with the lawful order or direction of a police
16 officer.

17 3. The operator of the motor vehicle violated the
18 instructions of the traffic-control signal so as to yield the
19 right-of-way to an immediately approaching authorized
20 emergency vehicle.

21 4. The motor vehicle was being operated as an
22 authorized emergency vehicle under Sections 32-5A-7 and
23 32-5-213 of the Code of Alabama 1975, and that the operator
24 was acting in compliance with that chapter.

1 5. The motor vehicle was stolen or being operated by
2 a person other than the owner of the vehicle without the
3 effective consent of the owner.

4 6. The license plate depicted in the recorded image
5 of the violation was a stolen plate and being displayed on a
6 motor vehicle other than the motor vehicle for which the plate
7 had been issued.

8 7. The presence of ice, snow, unusual amounts of
9 rain, or other unusually hazardous road conditions existed
10 that would make compliance with this act more dangerous under
11 the circumstances than noncompliance.

12 8. The person who received the notice of violation
13 was not the owner of the motor vehicle at the time of the
14 violation.

15 (k) To demonstrate that at the time of the violation
16 the motor vehicle was a stolen vehicle or the license plate
17 displayed on the motor vehicle was a stolen plate, the owner
18 must submit proof acceptable to the hearing officer that the
19 theft of the vehicle or license plate, prior to the time of
20 the violation, had been timely reported to the appropriate law
21 enforcement agency.

22 (1) Notwithstanding anything in this act to the
23 contrary, a person who fails to pay the amount of a civil fine
24 or to contest liability in a timely manner is entitled to an
25 adjudicative hearing on the violation if:

1 1. The person files an affidavit with the hearing
2 officer stating the date on which the person received the
3 notice of violation that was mailed to the person, if not
4 received by the 10th day after same is mailed as set out in
5 subsection (a) of Section 5.

6 2. Within the 15 days of the date of actual receipt,
7 the person requests an administrative adjudicative hearing.

8 Section 7. (a) Following an adjudicative hearing,
9 the municipal court judge shall issue an order stating:

10 (1) Whether the person charged with the civil
11 violation is liable for the violation; and, if so.

12 (2) The amount of the civil fine assessed against
13 the person, along with the fees and costs of court provided
14 for herein.

15 (b) The orders issued under this section may be
16 filed in the office of the Probate Judge of Dallas County,
17 Alabama, and shall operate as a judicial lien in the same
18 manner and with the same weight and effect as any other civil
19 judgment filed therein.

20 (c) A person who is found liable after an
21 adjudicative hearing may appeal that finding of civil
22 liability to the circuit court, by filing a notice of appeal
23 with the clerk of the municipal court. The notice of appeal
24 must be filed not later than the 14th day after the date on
25 which the municipal court judge entered the finding of civil

1 liability. The filing of a notice of appeal shall stay the
2 enforcement of the civil fine penalty. An appeal shall be
3 determined by the circuit court by trial de novo.

4 Section 8. (a) The circuit court hearing an appeal
5 shall use the procedures that apply to criminal convictions in
6 municipal court with the following qualifications:

7 (1) The proceedings shall retain their civil nature
8 on appeal with the circuit court applying the preponderance of
9 the evidence standard.

10 (2) If the person is adjudicated by the circuit
11 court to be responsible for payment of the civil fine, circuit
12 court costs shall be owed by the person adjudicated
13 responsible, with 100 percent of those court costs retained by
14 the circuit court. Court costs in the circuit court shall be
15 calculated as are court costs for criminal appeals from the
16 municipal court, and in the event the circuit court finds the
17 person appealing to not be responsible, no municipal court
18 costs shall be owed to the city.

19 (3) Regardless of the civil nature of the
20 proceedings, the circuit court, in its discretion and for its
21 administrative convenience, may assign case numbers as for
22 criminal appeals and place the appeals on criminal dockets in
23 the same manner as criminal appeals from municipal court.

24 (4) The circuit court shall sit as trier of both
25 fact and law in the civil proceedings in the circuit court.

1 (5) The city shall be responsible for providing an
2 attorney to represent the city and to prosecute the civil
3 proceedings in the circuit court.

4 Section 9. In the event the evidence produced by a
5 photographic traffic signal enforcement system does not
6 produce an image of the license plate with sufficient clarity
7 for a trained technician to determine the identity of the
8 owner, and if the identity cannot otherwise be reliably
9 established, then no notice of violation may be issued
10 pursuant to this act. If, however, a notice of violation is
11 issued, to the degree constitutionally allowed, those issues
12 related to the identity of the vehicle or its owner shall
13 affect the weight to be accorded the evidence and shall not
14 affect its admissibility.

15 Section 10. The city may provide by ordinance that
16 late fees not exceeding twenty-five dollars (\$25) per month
17 for each month after the issuance of the order imposing the
18 civil fine shall attach to untimely paid civil fines that are
19 authorized in this act. No person may be arrested or
20 incarcerated for nonpayment of a civil fine or late fee. No
21 record of an adjudication of civil violation made under this
22 act shall be listed, entered, or reported on any criminal
23 record or driving record, whether the record is maintained by
24 the city or an outside agency. An adjudication of civil
25 violation provided for in this act shall not be considered a

1 conviction for any purpose, shall not be used to increase or
2 enhance punishment for any subsequent offense of a criminal
3 nature, shall not be considered a moving violation, and shall
4 not be used by any insurance company to determine or affect
5 premiums or rates. The fact that a person is held liable or
6 responsible for a civil fine for a red light violation shall
7 not be used as evidence that the person was guilty of
8 negligence or other culpable conduct, and any evidence
9 generated by a photographic traffic signal enforcement system
10 may only be used as evidence in other proceedings if it is or
11 becomes admissible under the rules of evidence applicable
12 therein.

13 Section 11. The city shall adopt the procedures
14 authorized by this act, and shall keep statistical data
15 regarding the effectiveness of photographic traffic signal
16 enforcement systems in reducing traffic-control device
17 violations and intersectional collisions and shall communicate
18 the data on an annual basis to the Alabama Department of
19 Transportation and the Alabama Criminal Justice Information
20 Center.

21 Section 12. The placement of control devices and
22 timing of yellow lights and red light clearance intervals,
23 adopted by the city, shall conform to the most recent edition
24 of the Traffic Engineering Handbook. It shall be presumed that

1 the city is in compliance with this section unless the
2 contrary is shown by a preponderance of the evidence.

3 Section 13. No civil penalty may be imposed and no
4 adjudication of liability for a civil violation may be made
5 under this act if the operator of the vehicle was arrested or
6 was issued a citation and notice to appear by a sworn police
7 officer for a criminal violation of any portion of Article II,
8 Chapter 5A, Title 32 including, but not limited to, Sections
9 32-5A-31, 32-5A-34, and 32-5A-35 of the Code of Alabama 1975,
10 or any other municipal ordinance which embraces and
11 incorporates the statutes contained in that article, and which
12 occurred simultaneously with and under the same set of
13 circumstances which were recorded by the photographic traffic
14 signal enforcement system.

15 Section 14. Any person against whom an adjudication
16 of liability for a civil violation is made under this act, or
17 the ordinance passed pursuant hereto, and who actually pays
18 the civil fine imposed thereby shall have a cause of action
19 against any person who may be shown to have been operating the
20 vehicle recorded at the time of the violation for the amount
21 of the civil fine actually paid plus any consequential or
22 compensatory damages and a reasonable attorney fee, without
23 regard to the rules regarding joint and several liability,
24 contribution, or indemnity. Provided, however, that as a
25 condition precedent to the bringing of a civil action, that

1 the person held responsible for payment of the civil fine must
2 first make written demand on the other person for
3 reimbursement of the civil fine, giving a minimum of 60 days
4 to remit payment, and if reimbursement is fully made within
5 the 60-day period then the cause of action shall be
6 extinguished and no attorney fees or other damages shall
7 attach to the reimbursement. Any cause of action brought
8 pursuant to this section must be commenced within two years
9 from the date of the payment of the civil fine for a red light
10 violation.

11 Section 15. The provisions of this act are
12 severable. If any part of this act is declared invalid or
13 unconstitutional, that declaration shall not affect the part
14 which remains.

15 Section 16. This act shall become effective
16 immediately following its passage and approval by the
17 Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.

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Speaker of the House of Representatives

President and Presiding Officer of the Senate

House of Representatives

I hereby certify that the within Act originated in
and was passed by the House 13-APR-10.

Greg Pappas
Clerk

Senate

21-APR-10

Passed