

Senator Aument's Senator for a Day Radar for Local Law Enforcement Articles:



Local police can't use radar to enforce speed limits, but that could change soon

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By [Jan Murphy](#)

Pennsylvania has the distinction of being the only state in the nation that doesn't give its local law enforcement the authority to use [radar to enforce speed limits](#) and some lawmakers say it's long past time to change that.

At a Capitol Rotunda rally on Tuesday, law enforcement and municipal officials from around the state gathered with lawmakers to urge the public to encourage their local lawmakers to pass a law to give this tool to local police to make roads safer and reduce speed-related traffic deaths and injuries.

State College police Chief Tom King said Pennsylvania has the third highest number of speed-related deaths in the country behind the more populous Texas and California. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Pennsylvania had 550 killed in speed-related crashes in 2013, or 357 more people than the national average.

"Every year we refuse to permit radar for local law enforcement, we are losing three times more people to speed-related deaths than the national average," King said.

Others who spoke at the rally noted the irony that Pennsylvania trusts its local police officers with a firearm but not a radar gun. Sen. Randy Vulakovich, R-Allegheny County, said he also sees irony that state police who have the responsibility of policing many rural areas of the state have this tool yet local police in more traffic-congested areas don't.

"It's baffling," said Sen. Randy Vulakovich, R-Allegheny County, a former township police officer. "It's time for the General Assembly to take action on this issue."

Vulakovich, who noted that state police have used this tool for half a century, is sponsoring [Senate Bill 535](#) to give local law enforcement the authority to use radar. An identical bill, [House Bill 71](#), sponsored by Rep. Harry Readshaw, D-Allegheny, awaits action in the House.

James Sikorski Jr., the PA Advocate of the National Motorists Association, is among those who disagree that this is a tool that is needed. He has previously testified before a House committee, saying that while some argue it is the most accurate speed-enforcement out there, radar isn't all it's cracked up to be.

He said [studies show it is prone to operator error](#) and can result in police issuing tickets to the wrong vehicle if multiple cars are in the same area.

Rather than giving local law enforcement the authority to use radar, Sikorski suggests better traffic engineering be done on roadways and laws that require "speed limits be set to the 85th percentile free-flowing traffic speed [what he said is the engineering standard] and require tickets only be issued well above the speed limit."

He cited the most often heard objection that Vulakovich said he has heard to allowing local police to use radar for speed enforcement: it will be used by local municipalities as a money generator.

"Do the math," Vulakovich said. "Most of the money [from speeding tickets] comes to the state. Very little stays back home. This is a safety issue."

Besides, he said after the rally, he considers that whole argument to be silly.

"If somebody does go so extensive and is running it, running it and running it, sooner or later, people are going to go to the mayor, the council or police department to make a point of it and it'll stop," he said.

http://www.pennlive.com/politics/index.ssf/2016/04/lawmakers_call_for_arming_loca.html



Pa. police departments hoping for permission to use speed radar

Local law enforcement officials in Pennsylvania have been asking to use radar for years

By [WKBN Staff](#) Published: November 14, 2017, 9:21 pm Updated: November 14, 2017, 11:43 pm

Related Coverage

- HERMITAGE, Pa. (WKBN) – None of Pennsylvania’s local police departments are permitted to use radar to enforce speed limits but that could soon change.

For a second straight year, the Pennsylvania Senate passed the [bill that would allow municipal police departments to use radar](#) to catch speeders.

Right now, Pennsylvania State Police are the only ones allowed to use the devices in the state. But as this bill heads to the House, local departments are hoping it passes this time.

“It’s long overdue,” said Hermitage Police Chief Eric Jewell.

Local law enforcement officials have been asking to use radar for years.

“Radar is much more durable. It’s user-friendly and it’s just all around way more efficient,” Jewell said.

Pennsylvania is the only state in the country that doesn’t allow local police to use this technology. The departments use something called VASCAR, which times a vehicle’s speed.

“It’s a system that takes two or three guys to run. It sits alongside the road. Whenever a cruiser is chasing a speeder or something, then it’s sitting by itself,” said Hermitage Police Corporal Chad Nych. “It’s been stolen in the past while we’ve been gone so the radar is going to eliminate two or three officers running it. A lot less setup.”

Along with being easier to use, police say radar will allow them to set up in smaller nooks and crannies where speed is a problem.

“If everybody was compliant with speed laws, we wouldn’t need any of this but every once in awhile, somebody is late for work or not paying attention or deliberately speeding for whatever reason,” Jewell said. “The increased speeds can cause accidents and we want to use the most effective tool available to law enforcement to help keep our streets safe.”

Officials believe one of the reasons why this bill hasn’t gained traction in past has to do with fears that local police will use it as a money generator.

“What the state legislators decide, where the money goes, and to whom, and the how much — I don’t care,” Jewell said. “I only care about safety out on our roadways for our pedestrians, for our other motorists, for our children. It’s about safety.”

In the eyes of the Hermitage Police Department, this technology would not only crack down on speeding but keep officers safer as well.

“This stuff is bulky, it’s awkward, it gets damaged easily, which throws off the calibration certifications and then we have to repair it, which is more costs,” Jewell said.

Still, some believe radar isn't all it's cracked up to be. Advocates for the National Motorists Association say studies show radar is prone to operator error and can result in police issuing tickets to the wrong vehicle if multiple cars are in the same area.

Even if it becomes law, local governments would still have to give their approval to using radar.

Signs would have to be posted, warning about the use of radar. Drivers would not be convicted if their speed is less than 10 miles over the speed limit.

<http://wkbn.com/2017/11/14/pa-police-departments-hoping-for-permission-to-use-speed-radar/>