

## 6.14: Myth - "Police Only Write Speeding Tickets to Harass Citizens and it is Entrapment"

Many people believe that a traffic officer or for that fact, any police officer, who is engaging in speed enforcement and is hidden, is guilty of entrapment and such behavior is tantamount to harassment. First, an officer does not have to be wholly or partially visible in order for a traffic citation to be valid. Also, the officer does not have to take you to, or show you a photo of, the speed limit sign (applicable for the location you were driving), before a citation is issued. If you get behind the wheel of a motor vehicle, you are required to know the speed limit of the roads you drive. If you decide to speed, even just one mile over the speed limit, you are, by the letter of the law, speeding, and this is a traffic offense. If an officer either through radar or visual speed estimation, determines you are speeding, that officer has every legal right, to issue you a speeding citation.

However, let's consider a different situation. If, while having coffee at a local coffee shop, an officer started chatting with you about a new speed limit along Main St. The officer told you that the speed limit had been raised from 20 mph to 35 mph (which was a lie); And believing that officer, you left the coffee shop and drove along Main St. going 35 mph. You then glanced up and saw the unmistakable red and blue lights in your rear-view mirror. You were stopped by a different officer, who told you the speed limit was only 20 mph (not 35 mph) and issued you a speeding citation. These actions would be considered entrapment because the other officer was trying to get you to engage in criminal behavior.

Now onto why it is not harassment for an officer to give out speeding citations. According to The Association for Safe International Road Travel; "Nearly 1.25 million people die in road crashes each year, and an additional 20-50 million are injured or disabled" (2018). Our police are tasked with making our roads safe and saving lives. Since 3,287 people die every DAY from traffic collisions, police must take responsibility and try to lower this massive number. Therefore, police study not only where these crashes are occurring, but the mitigating factors that cause them. It may surprise you to know that the number one cause for road crashes, is speeding. How do police then slow people down? Education is the first step, however, sometimes the only way to educate is through a speeding citation.

The next time you get a speeding citation (for going faster than the posted speed limit), instead of accusing the officer of harassment, you should take responsibility and be the first step in lowering the number of deaths from related road crashes. <sup>[1]</sup>

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1. Road Safety Facts. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.asirt.org/safe-travel/road-safety-facts/>

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