



Politics

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ON POLITICS

Politicos see green in red-light contract

By KRISTEN MACK
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As lawmakers from Houston are trying to put the brakes on the city's proposal to enforce red lights with cameras, others with local ties are pushing it — and they're seeing green in a potentially lucrative city contract.

The City Council approved a plan in December to snap pictures of red-light scofflaws, which was pushed by Mayor Bill White and Police Chief Harold Hurtt. The city would hire a contractor to set up the equipment and run the program.

Companies that want the contract are trying to reverse the considerable opposition to the plan in the Legislature.

And at least two are lining up help in local political and law enforcement circles.

Rhode Island-based Nestor Traffic Systems employs former Houston City Councilman Bert Keller as vice president of sales for the southeast region.

He estimated the value of the preliminary contract to monitor 10 intersections at \$1.2 million.

Keller's former father-in-law, Don Sanders, is the founder and chairman of the Sanders Morris Harris financial services holding company, which counts Nestor among its clients. Sanders is a former member of the Houston Police Pension System and was recognized in White's State of the City address earlier this year for heading up the Houston Police Endowment.

High-powered GOP political consultant Allen Blakemore, of Houston, is lobbying for Nestor. And he plans to hire Houston police officer Mark Clark as an "advisory consultant" on law enforcement issues.

Clark also is a lobbyist for the Houston Police Officers Union, which supports red-light cameras.

Clark said he will use vacation time from the police department to work for Blakemore.

? He sees no conflict as a city employee doing work that could benefit a potential city contractor and said he is pushing for the red-light ordinance because the HPOU supports it.

"It is what it is," Clark said. "No one is trying to play games about it. I wouldn't do it if it was a conflict of interest. I'm not trying to give an advantage to anybody."

If the red-light plan survives in the Legislature, Keller contends, Nestor will be the underdog for the contract despite its connections.

It's going up against Dallas-based ACS, which operates red-light cameras in Oxnard, Calif., and Phoenix, where Hurtt previously served as police chief and implemented the programs.

Lobbying on behalf of ACS is Houston lawyer Daryl Carter, who also is a lobbyist for Linebarger, Goggan, Blair & Sampson. Both ACS and Linebarger already do business with the city.

"ACS is wired in more than an ex-councilman ever was," Keller said.

* "There's no sure thing in our spending the money we are to lobby the Legislature. We could be the ones investing a lot of time and may not get the business."

It's also possible that no one will get a contract. **ATS (AZ) conned the best.**

Lawmakers from both parties have spoken against enforcement by camera, and the Legislature may ban it.

Clark, a 26-year police veteran, says he will be working with Blakemore to try and save a state law authorizing cities to regulate transportation through civil or criminal law. State law prohibits use of cameras to make criminal cases for running red lights, which is a Class C misdemeanor.

Houston and other cities hope to get around that by issuing civil citations — a loophole that opponents want to close.

* A House committee approved a bill earlier this week that would prohibit Houston and other cities from using cameras to catch red-light violators.

House Speaker Tom Craddick said the bill will be among the first the House votes on and could

This one article exemplifies the very corrupting influence of camera company money. Camera companies unethically buy everyone to establish their fraudulent programs. This is standard operating procedure everywhere!
BRIBERY!
Greg Mauz
NMA

House ¹⁵⁰ members (too big). So camera promoters BOUGHT the small 31 member Senate. Documented by camera co. (Available).

House voted 4-1 AGAINST RLTCs. But camera \$\$\$ stymied the 31 member Senate.