

DOES IT MAKE FINANCIAL SENSE TO FIRE 278 REGISTRY OF MOTOR VEHICLE INSPECTORS?

In an effort to curtail the costs of state government, the Governor has proposed to eliminate 278 Registry of Motor Vehicle police officers which he estimated will save the Commonwealth 1.6 Million dollars. Not only will this proposal not save any money, it will cost the Commonwealth millions of dollars of lost revenue annually, and place the safety of motoring public at great risk.

The Registry police officers annually generate substantially more income for the State than the cost of their salaries. For example, \$2.8 Million is raised from their citations, and they are also responsible for producing an additional \$2.8 Million by forcing registration of passenger vehicles and trailers which have chosen to register illegally in other states. They also compile part of the \$4.2 Million from fees for road testing for licenses. While these figures represent actual income, the Commonwealth will not receive as a result of the Governor's proposal, several other sources of revenue which will be lost to the Commonwealth.

A new program, designed to eliminate Massachusetts as the stolen car capital of the United States, will require vehicle identification numbers to be verified by Registry police before an auto can be salvaged or destroyed. This program should have a significant impact on "chop shop" operations and reduce insurance fraud and therefore auto insurance premiums. The projected loss of income from this operation alone is approximately \$10 Million.

Another program, federally mandated, requires that 250,000 Massachusetts commercially licensed drivers must be re-examined to conform to new federal guidelines. Apart from the expected 10 Million dollars of income which this program will create, if it is not implemented by April 1, 1992, the Commonwealth risks losing over Sixty-Five Million Dollars in Federal Highway Funds.

Clearly, the Governor's proposal to save 1.6 Million dollars by eliminating 278 Registry Inspectors makes no economic sense and is, in fact, a prescription for disaster if it means a loss of nearly 100 Million Dollars in sorely needed revenue.

Quite apart from the extraordinary financial losses that will result from the elimination of the Registry Police, there are very serious public safety issues which will be exacerbated. To be a Registry Inspector requires a level of knowledge and expertise concerning motor vehicle laws which the usual law enforcement agency simply does not possess. For example, who is going to assume responsibility for the safety of our children's transportation to and from school if the Registry Inspectors do not conduct annually the more than 5,000 school bus safety inspections? Who is going to oversee the licensing and compliance of motor vehicle inspection stations and driver education schools or enforce the uninsured motorist program? The number of safety related duties such as fatal accident investigations and other too numerous to mention will certainly be neglected by other state police agencies which already are overburdened by the steadily increasing rate of serious crimes.

The RMV police are the most cost effective of any of the statewide police officers and are responsible for the highest per capita rate of return to the State Treasury.