



Testimony on House Bill 6965 (limit on retention of information gathered by state at toll booths)

Submitted by Scott Shepard, Policy Director

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Good afternoon. My name is Scott Shepard. I am the Policy & Research Director for the Yankee Institute for Public Policy, Connecticut's free-market think tank. I submit this note in support of **Bill 6965**.

Introduction of tolls to Connecticut now – especially if applicable to personal cars – is a flawed policy that Yankee Institute opposes. Before the state demands more revenue of its citizens, especially a regressive tax on such basic necessary activities as driving to work, it must revise rules and policies that make Connecticut's transportation-construction and -maintenance costs some of the highest in the country. Until and unless these are systematically and significantly reduced, the state has no right or standing to seek one cent more from its overburdened citizens.

This bill addresses one of the ancillary negative impacts of tolling: it provides the state yet another way to invade, without warrant, cause or limit, the privacy of its citizens. Too often the state of Connecticut reverses a basic maxim of the government of a free people: the *government* must always be transparent, while the *people* must – without warrant arising from good-cause properly proved – be left secure, uninvasive and unwatched in their private lives and activities.

Collection and retention of basic information about free movement by citizens who are accused of nothing fundamentally violates this central principle.

If there are eventually to be cashless tolls in Connecticut, then the state should be restricted to collecting, at those toll gantries, only information necessary to the charging of the tolls. It should be restricted from using the information collected for any other purpose. And it should be required to destroy that information utterly once a reasonable time has elapsed in which the information might – in the normal case – serve that sole administrative purpose.

Additionally, during the limited period in which the state holds on to the information, it should be excluded from Freedom of Information Act requests. Freedom of information statutes are designed to render the government transparent to the people. They should not be perverted to reduce to the vanishing point the sphere of private-citizen action.

Tolling Connecticut's drivers instead of reforming Connecticut's transportation spending is exactly the sort of policy mistake that has led to Connecticut's years' of steady decline. Using

tolling to *also* turn Connecticut into a surveillance state would add insupportable injury to direct insult.