

January 21, 2021

House Transportation Committee
HCR 3004

Chairman Ruby and Committee members:

Let the record reflect my support for House Concurrent Resolution 3004 ("HCR 3004"), as written, and as introduced by Representatives Becker, Christensen, Jones, Kading, Paur, and Senators Clements and D. Larsen.

Dynamic signs add to the already voluminous distractions to drivers, thereby creating the exact sort of safety hazard they are purporting to be addressing. By their very nature, these signs are intended to direct the eyes of passing motorists.

Now, in the context of warning of traffic or weather conditions, or in identifying missing persons, a reasonable argument may be made that these signs remain a net benefit. Their ability to convey information regarding changing conditions in real time furthers the safety of our communities. However, the messaging on such signs has grown far beyond such useful purposes into a propagandized waste of taxpayer funded resources (I do not need to be paying somebody to send me messages on the road insisting I "mask up", nor does taking my eyes off the road to read a message board instructing me to not text while driving provide any less degree of distraction than if I was engaging in the exact sort of behavior the sign is requesting I avoid).

Aside from the distractions they create to motorists, and the unnecessary misallocation of staff resources, while these signs may seem outwardly innocuous, their messaging often implies a demand for subservience. To be frank, they have morphed into being eerily Orwellian, in a "Big Brother is watching you" sort of manner. The purpose of this observation is not to imply mal-intent, rather just to make plain the inappropriateness of the use of such signs as a medium for delivering this sort of messaging.

Wise men of antiquity cautioned against the use of governmental power beyond the limited purposes proscribed to it. While the use of dynamic road signs to "modify people's behavior and promote social conformity" may seem rather benign in isolation, it is the culmination of a multitude of such mediums that can morph good intentions into despotism. Since I cannot top the wisdom of such men, I conclude with a few quotes for your consumption while considering approval of HCR 3004:

"Government's first duty is to protect the people, not run their lives." - Reagan

"If we can but prevent the government from wasting the labours of the people, under the pretence of taking care of them, they must become happy." -- Jefferson

"Of all tyrannies, a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It would be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies. The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end for they do so with the approval of their own conscience." -- C.S. Lewis

Respectfully,

