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## Family of man hurt in police van seeks civil rights charges

By Pat Eaton-Robb

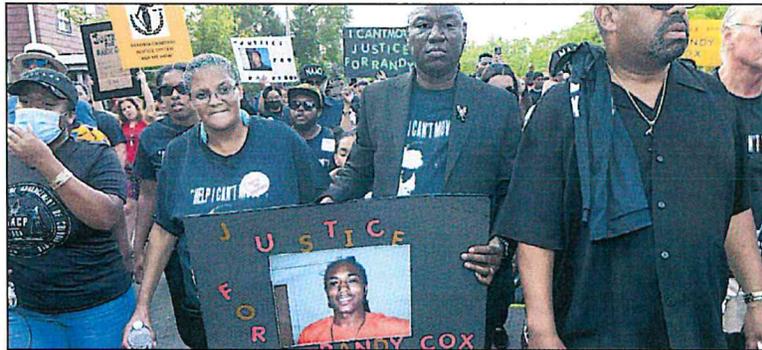
Associated Press

The family of a Black man in Connecticut, paralyzed when a police van without seatbelts braked suddenly, asked federal authorities Friday to file civil rights charges against the officers involved.

The driver was taking Randy Cox, 36, to a police station in New Haven, Connecticut, on June 19 for processing on a weapons charge when he braked hard to avoid a collision, police said, causing Cox to fly headfirst into the wall of the van. His family said he remains paralyzed from the chest down.

Cox's mother, two sisters and civil rights attorney Ben Crump spoke before meeting with U.S. Department of Justice officials in New Haven Friday, arguing that Cox's constitutional rights were violated.

"You ask yourself, was it cruel and unusual punishment to put him in the back of that police transportation van with no seat belt, knowing that if you're speeding, if you slam on the brakes, that somebody is going to be seriously injured?" Crump said.



Arnold Gold / New Haven Register via AP

Doreen Coleman, left, mother of Richard 'Randy' Cox, Jr., walks Friday with civil rights attorney Benjamin Crump during a march for Justice for Randy Cox on Dixwell Avenue in New Haven.

Cox's supporters say the police mocked his cries for help and accused him of being drunk. Video shows the officers dragged him by his feet from the van and placed him in a holding cell at the police department before paramedics

finally took him to a hospital. Cox remains hospitalized and unable to speak because of his breathing tube.

Hundreds of protesters led by Crump, members of Cox's family and the local NAACP staged a march Friday evening in

New Haven to the city's police headquarters. With many carrying signs and banners with Cox's face and the hashtag #Justice4RandyCox, the crowd chanted slogans like "Randy Cox's life matters," "protect Black people" and "no justice, no peace."

Using a bullhorn, Crump and others yelled to the marchers: "If I say my neck is broke." In unison, they responded: "Don't take it as a joke."

The city announced a series of police reforms Thursday stemming from the case. The reforms include eliminating the use of police vans for most prisoner transports and using marked police vehicles instead. They also require officers to immediately call for an ambulance to respond to their location if the prisoner requests or appears to need medical aid.

Cox's family said they appreciate the gesture but want more to be done.

"Why do you need a policy that says if someone needs help for you to give them help?" Latoya Boomer, Cox's sister, said. "That should never have to be a policy. That should be in your own brain already."

## As value of old cars goes up, residents see bigger tax bills

By Abigail Brone

The Hour, Norwalk/TNS

Even though Connecticut recently enacted a lower cap on the property tax rate on motor vehicles, many residents are seeing an increase in their tax bill as older car increased in value over the past two years.

Norwalk resident Polly McNamee received her latest bill at the end of June and was surprised to find that the property tax on her 2015 Honda CRV had increased by \$55 over last year's bill.

"The mill rate did not change; the car value changed because the car value went up since last year. In today's economy, it's kind of a slap in the face," McNamee said. "Historically, the car has depreciated every year, and yes it's a wonky economy, but there should be some consideration of the taxpayer here."

A retiree, McNamee said she got a heads-up on the bigger bill by checking the anticipated cost online before the bill arrived in the mail. But still, she was shocked by the increase.

Residents of more than 70 municipalities in Connecticut expected lower car tax bills after the new cap on property taxes on motor vehicles went into effect July 1, lowering it from 45 mills to 32.46 mills.

The new cap, which was approved as part of the state budget in May, lowered the amount each municipality can charge for taxes on motor vehicles.

Previously, towns and cities could charge up to \$45 in taxes per \$1,000 of assessed value, or 45 mills, according to General Assembly documents. Now, the cap is \$32.46 in taxes per \$1,000 of assessed value.

With a shortage of cars and car parts, especially the necessary computer chips, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and rising inflation, the cost of used and new cars has increased significantly, said Chris Colibee, communications director at the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management.

The decrease in tax rate saved taxpayers statewide about \$100 million, but in many cases it was counteracted by the rise in vehicle values this year, Colibee

said.

"Taxpayers have also seen an average increase of 26 percent to the assessed values of their vehicles, which are currently based on fair market value," Colibee said. "While some taxpayers are still seeing a net increase in their tax bills compared to last year, this increase would certainly be much higher if the state had not imposed a lower tax rate cap and provided funding to towns."

Based on Connecticut state law, the assessment of a car is 70 percent of its average retail value. To determine that, assessors use the average retail values provided by the National Automobile Dealer's Association each year.

For vehicles not included in the association's list, assessors are responsible for determining the car's value, according to state law.

In the latest budget bill, the method for determining vehicle value will change, easing the burden for residents in the future, Colibee said.

"The budget bill also changes the basis for vehicle assessment from market value to a depreciating schedule begin-

ning in October 2023, which will provide more stability and predictability to taxpayers," Colibee said.

The state also increased the property tax credit from \$200 to \$300, which applies to a vehicle that is sold, totally damaged, stolen or registered in another state.

"At the end of day, the state has tried to mitigate this and provide relief for taxpayers knowing costs have gone up. We all live and work in the state, we all understand values of vehicles have gone up," Colibee said.

Norwich resident Mike Caprio received his tax bill at the beginning of the month and noticed a similar increase in the value of his 6-year-old car.

"Yes, the mill rate was lowered, but the city tripled the assessed value on my 2016 car," Caprio said. "Thus, raising my tax from \$199 in 2021 to \$513.52 this year."

While the state is working to mitigate the impact on taxpayers due to the car part shortage and inflation in future payments, July tax bills will still be higher for many, officials said.