

# Life and Death in the Fast Lane: Police Enforcement and Traffic Fatalities

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# Why Do We Care?

- Policy: What is the effect of police enforcement on traffic crime and fatalities?
- Economics: What is the new equilibrium outcome in the police/criminal game?

# Data

- State police enforcement levels in Oregon, Idaho, & Washington (LEOKA & administrative records)
- Every citation given by OSP from 2000-2005
- Fatal car accidents - timing and characteristics (NHTSA)
- Vehicle miles travelled (NHTSA)
- Nonfatal car accidents in Oregon, Idaho, & Washington
- Auto-recorded speeds (ODoT)
- Weather, unemployment, demographics, commuting characteristics, & public transportation utilization

# Methodology and Research Design

- DiD and synthetic control
- Exog. variation from Oregon layoffs (117/354 troopers)
- Estimated with OLS and Poisson

# Contribution

- Isolates deterrence effect
- Less police  $\implies$  More fatal & nonfatal accidents
- Keeping police/VMT constant since 1979 could prevent 5,031 deaths and cost \$1.5b (\$309,000 / life saved)

# Things I Liked

- Addressed confounding concerns - more miles road quality, seatbelts, teen drivers, drunk drivers

# Concerns

- Changes to hours/shifts
- Results from 2003 are extrapolated to 1979-2005

# Extension

- Government shutdown - local or federal