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Civil Liberties Experts and Law Enforcement Join to Offer Comprehensive Guidelines on Police Body Cameras

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Police departments deploying police body cameras should adopt a number of specific policies and practices that will ensure accountability, transparency, and public trust while minimizing threats to privacy, a bipartisan group of former law enforcement and military officers, civil liberties advocates, and criminal justice experts said in a report released today.

Police body cameras are being rapidly deployed throughout the country with the promise of adding accountability and improving community relations. But absent proper guidelines and the opportunity for meaningful community input, body cameras may actually create perceptions of obstructing legitimate oversight, or be co-opted as a surveillance tool.

"These commonsense, consensus recommendations will make body cameras more effective, allowing law enforcement to increase accountability and build public trust," said James Trainum, one of the co-chairs of [The Constitution Project Committee on Policing Reforms](#), a group comprising former law enforcement and military officers, prosecutors, judges, and experts in criminal law. The group released its report, [Guidelines for the Use of Body-Worn Cameras by Law Enforcement](#), today. Trainum served 27 years as a detective with the Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, D.C.

Many police departments that use body cameras are [falling behind in requiring effective guidelines](#), and this must change, said co-chair Kami Chavis, a law professor and director of the Criminal Justice Program at Wake Forest University School of Law. "Police body cameras have potential for greater accountability and can be valuable training tools. It is important, however, that departments do not rush to implement these new tools without proper protections for constitutional values. Hopefully our report will guide law enforcement in a manner that adds trust and accountability while also protecting civil rights and civil liberties."

The report provides 23 recommendations on a number of challenging policy issues, including public release of footage, pre-report review of footage by officers, and the incorporation of invasive technologies, such as facial recognition, into body cameras.

According to the group's third co-chair, Jeffrey Vagle, executive director of the Center for Technology, Innovation and Competition at the University of Pennsylvania Law School, "Body camera policies present complex challenges, balancing concerns of transparency, privacy, and due process. We are pleased to have a group with such diversity of viewpoints and experiences take these challenges on, and provide solutions that can aid law enforcement and the public at large."

The report, with a complete listing of the 26 committee members endorsing it, is available at <http://www.constitutionproject.org/documents/bodycameras/>.

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Created out of the belief that we must cast aside the labels that divide us in order to keep our democracy strong, The Constitution Project brings together policy experts and legal practitioners from

across the political spectrum to foster consensus-based solutions to the most difficult constitutional challenges of our time through scholarship, advocacy, policy reform and public education initiatives. Established in 1997, TCP is based in Washington, D.C.