

Require Body Worn Cameras and Vehicle Dashcams, Clear and Consistent Policies on Their Use, and Public Access to Recordings of Alleged Misconduct

Video footage of police shootings has illustrated graphically the complaints communities have been raising for years. Action on complaints of misconduct should not require video proof. However, body worn cameras and video dashcams can be useful tools in ensuring transparency in law enforcement. Police departments need to have clear and consistent policies about the use of these tools so that (1) video recording tools are not misused or turned off in order to evade scrutiny, and (2) the civil rights of community members are respected.

Video recording is not effective when officers have broad discretion about when the recording devices are turned off.^{xxx} In addition, critical encounters have not been recorded because officers claim that the cameras were not functional or there was some technological glitch.^{xxxi} Policies about the use of video recording devices need to be clear about the requirements for their use and include penalties for failing to meet these requirements.

Body cameras raise civil liberties concerns because of the ability to record people in their homes. Some police departments that have implemented body cameras have procedures that allow people being filmed to ask for the body camera to be turned off in limited situations.^{xxxii} In order to protect the privacy of people whose homes are entered by police wearing body cameras, police should give residents the option to have the body camera turned off.

The interest in privacy should not be used to hide body camera footage from the public. A new North Carolina law exempts body camera footage from the public records law.^{xxxiii} This extreme law undermines the transparency purposes of body cameras and ignores less invasive measures such as redacting footage before releasing it.