



June 29, 2017

For Immediate Release

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CA Legislature Advances Bill To Stop Secret Surveillance In California

Sacramento-On June 27, the Assembly Public Safety Committee of the CA Legislature voted 4-2 to support SB 21, a statewide surveillance equipment transparency initiative. Having cleared the Senate side, this was the third of four policy committees to review the bill. If adopted, SB 21 would bring municipal privacy reforms enacted in the County of Santa Clara and in process in Oakland, Berkeley, the Bay Area Rapid Transit District and several other Norcal cities and counties, to all 482 cities and 57 counties across the state.

At Tuesday's hearing in the State Capitol, bill author Senator Jerry Hill from San Mateo said "the bill creates public disclosure and legislative oversight and changes a status quo where law enforcement agencies deploy multiple kinds of tracking equipment and technologies with no public review at all."

Dave Maas, a researcher with the San Francisco-based Electronic Frontier Foundation, said "law enforcement officials are acquiring advanced surveillance technologies without the info they need to make an educated decision." He suggested that "a public process is necessary to determine whether surveillance technologies and their costs to our privacy and budget are proportionate to the public safety interest."

Both Hill and Maas cited examples of boondoggles that have compromised both civil rights and municipal budgets, including the use of license plate readers in mosque parking lots on the East Coast and the city of Calexico's secret surveillance program which was condemned in a Department of Justice anti-corruption investigation in 2016.

Brian Hofer, the chair of Oakland's Municipal Privacy Advisory Commission, the first standing municipal privacy commission with oversight of surveillance equipment in the country, said "there's nothing radical about SB-21 other than that it hasn't been done before regarding surveillance equipment. We spend more time discussing and imposing regulations on barber shops and taco trucks than on equipment capable of tracking my whereabouts in real time, locating me within my own home, place of worship or doctors office or tracking my face as I walk about town."

Johnathan Feldman, speaking on behalf of the CA Police Chiefs Association in opposition to the bill, advocated for the continuation of secret law enforcement surveillance saying "anytime we open things up for questions from the public, there's a concern that we may have to field some of those questions."

Committee chair and head of the CA Legislative Black Caucus Reginald Jones-Sawyer indicated support for the bill and said he “hoped the bill sponsors could assuage some, if not all, of law enforcement's concerns”.

A video of the 20 minute hearing can be viewed in its entirety [here](#).

In June of 2015, Oakland became the first city in California to create a standing commission on privacy to advise municipal officials. In June of 2016, the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors unanimously adopted the first surveillance equipment transparency ordinance in California.

SB 21 will next be heard in its fourth and final policy committee hearing on July 11 at 1:30pm in the Assembly Privacy and Consumer Protection Committee.

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Oakland Privacy is a citizen's coalition that works regionally to defend the right to privacy and enhance public transparency and oversight regarding the use of surveillance techniques and equipment.