



October 23, 2015

To: Interested Parties

Fr: Anzalone Liszt Grove Research

Re: Poll Finds Strong Support for Strict Guidelines and Community Input for Body-Worn Cameras, for Banning Racial Profiling and for Reforming Civil Asset Forfeiture Laws

A recent nationwide poll on criminal justice issues finds that Americans support body-worn cameras for police officers, but believe it is essential that police work with their communities and civil rights advocates to establish clear rules for how these cameras and their footage are used. Americans see such safeguards as essential to ensuring that body-worn cameras can be used most effectively to provide greater transparency, accountability and safety for law enforcement officers and the communities they serve.

The poll also found that most Americans support a ban on racial profiling by law enforcement, national security agencies and immigration officials and heavily favor reforming civil asset forfeiture laws. Although most Americans are unfamiliar with these laws, which allow law enforcement to seize a person's cash and property without charging them with a crime, they strongly oppose them after a brief description. Below are some key findings from the poll:¹

BODY-WORN CAMERAS

- **There is overwhelming support for requiring police officers to wear body cameras.** Nearly nine out of ten (88%) Americans want to require police to wear body cameras while on duty. Support reaches at least 80% among each racial group, with intense support especially high among African Americans (73% *strongly* support requiring body cameras, vs. 62% of Americans overall). Eighty-eight percent of the public also believes the cameras would help hold police accountable and over two-thirds (67%) feel they would reduce police brutality.

¹ This memo is based on the results of a national online poll of 880 adults conducted by Anzalone Liszt Grove Research on behalf of The Leadership Conference Education Fund. The poll was conducted July 28 – August 2, 2015 and included an oversample of 50 Asian Americans. Interviews were apportioned geographically and demographically based on Census data.

- **Americans feel it is very important that police work with their communities and civil rights advocates to establish usage policies for cameras and their footage.** While the public strongly supports more body cameras, they also firmly believe that in order for them to be most effective, there must be clear guidelines for how they are used, and they must have buy-in from the community. Three-quarters feel it is *very* or *extremely* important for police to work with their local communities and with civil rights advocates to establish clear policies regarding the usage of these cameras and their footage.
- **The public opposes police viewing footage before writing their report and they want clear limits on the use of facial recognition technology.** In addition to getting input from the local community and civil rights advocates, the public also wants additional steps taken to help prevent the potential abuse of these cameras. Seven out of ten oppose letting police officers view footage before they write their incident reports and 72% want clear limits on how facial recognition technology can be used with these cameras.
- **There is broad support for making body camera footage available to the public when police misconduct is reported, as well as to any criminal defendant.** To help ensure these cameras can be used to help hold police accountable, 80% want the footage to be made publicly available in any case where police misconduct is reported, as well as to any criminal defendant.
- **Americans want more federal funding for body cameras.** Given the strong desire for more body cameras, over three quarters of Americans (78%) support requiring the federal government to provide funding for body cameras.

POLICE SURVEILLANCE AND RACIAL PROFILING

- **Over 60% of Americans oppose communities of color being disproportionately targeted by police surveillance.** Not surprisingly, this opposition is highest among communities of color (78% oppose among African Americans and 72% among Latinos) but a strong majority of whites (58%) also find it unacceptable. Regardless of whether they are opposed to it, most Americans (55%) believe communities of color are more likely to be targeted by police surveillance than whites.
- **The public firmly supports a ban on racial profiling, both by police and by national security agencies and immigration officials.** A strong majority of Americans (57%) support banning racial profiling by local and federal law enforcement, and support is just as high (56%) for a similar ban for national security agencies and immigration officials. While support for a ban is higher among communities of color, whites also support a ban by double digit margins in both cases.

CIVIL ASSET FORFEITURE

- **Over three quarters of Americans are unfamiliar with civil asset forfeiture laws but strongly oppose them after hearing a description.** Just 23% of Americans claim to have heard of “civil asset forfeiture laws,” but once we gave respondents a brief description of them (below), they did not like what they heard. By a 28-point margin (31% support / 59% oppose), the public opposed these laws after the description.

Description of Civil Asset Forfeiture Laws:

Civil asset forfeiture laws allow law enforcement to seize a person's cash and property if they believe it has been involved in criminal activity. Under these laws, the property owner doesn't have to be charged with a crime to lose their property.

- **Following the description of civil asset forfeiture laws, 74% support legislation that would reform them.** Support for reform is strong across racial and partisan lines. At least two-thirds of each racial group supports reforming the laws as do at least 70% of Democrats, Republicans and Independents.