



DIGITAL FOURTH

The Massachusetts campaign to protect digital data
from unconstitutional government surveillance

MEDIA ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, March 7, 2016

LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON POLICE MILITARIZATION

When: Tuesday, March 8, 2016

Time: Hearing begins 10:30am; public testimony likely to begin around 11:15am.

Where: Massachusetts State House, hearing room A-2

CONTACT

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MA Residents Call For Democratic Oversight of Police Military Equipment Purchases

CAMBRIDGE—The Legislature’s Public Safety Committee is holding a hearing on H. 2169, a bill that would require elected municipal officials to vote before police departments could accept gifts of or purchase equipment designed for military uses.

Over the last few years, police departments across Massachusetts, in towns and cities ranging from New Bedford to tiny Rehoboth have acquired over \$12m worth of equipment,¹ including mine-resistant military assault vehicles, without any input from the elected officials in those towns. Police departments across the state are also exploring acquiring drones, stingrays, and other exotic technologies of surveillance and crowd control. In response, Digital Fourth introduced H. 2169, a short bill that would require civilian elected officials to have a say before their police department acquires such equipment.

“For us, it’s about democracy,” says Alex Marthews, Digital Fourth’s president. “There may be reasons for the Rehoboth police to acquire a vehicle designed to protect soldiers against insurgents planting IEDs, but whatever the reasons are – and we can’t think of any – the decision about what kind of police

¹ A full list of the equipment obtained by town is at <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2014/12/03/the-pentagon-finally-details-its-weapons-for-cops-giveaway#.8iBMFWQBD>.

force to have should be taken in the open, by civilian elected officials, instead of being at the police chief's sole discretion."

The bill was filed by Rep. Denise Provost (D-Somerville), who notes, *"The acquisition of military equipment by police departments is one of the factors that erodes community trust. Our police are already armed; promotion of public safety relies much more on approachability and relationships than outfitting local police as if they were an occupying army."*

About Digital Fourth: Digital Fourth, or the Campaign for Digital Fourth Amendment Rights, is a volunteer group of Massachusetts residents concerned about civil liberties, founded in 2012. We meet weekly in Cambridge. We have filed legislation this session dealing with police body-worn cameras (H. 2170) as well as police militarization. We are the Massachusetts chapter of the Restore The Fourth movement, which opposes unconstitutional mass government surveillance.

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