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Smile — your local police department may be videotaping every move you make

Libertarians denounce growing use of “Peeping Tom” surveillance

WASHINGTON, DC — No, you’re not paranoid — the police really *are* watching you, the Libertarian Party says.

At least that’s the case if you live in Baltimore (MD), Tacoma (WA), or dozens of other cities where police departments have started recording your every public move with video cameras — just in *case* you commit a crime.

“Every breath you take, every move you make, they’ll be watching you,” said Libertarian Party chairman Steve Dasbach, paraphrasing the popular 1980s song from the band called — ironically — The Police.

“This is a frightening trend,” Dasbach said. “Instead of chasing real criminals, police are conducting around-the-clock surveillance of thousands of innocent Americans who are minding their own business. In an attempt to protect us from vandals and traffic violators, the government is committing an offense that’s far worse: Violating our basic, fundamental expectation of privacy.”

Over the past few months, Baltimore, Tacoma, and many other cities have installed video cameras in public places in an attempt to record crimes in progress. Currently, the Pittsburgh City Council is considering installing cameras to deter vandals on the city’s North Side.

“Politicians always claim they have a good reason — such as fighting crime — for suspending our freedoms,” Dasbach said. “But giving in to their demands only whets their appetite, and soon they come back for more.”

In Baltimore, for example, Mayor Kurt Schmoke demanded surveillance cameras near a downtown food court plagued by petty crime, Dasbach noted. Shortly after the cameras were installed, Schmoke bragged that 200 *more* video cameras would be put in to monitor residents on every single block in the downtown area.

Think you’re alone in your car? Actually, you might be on candid camera. Police in Fairfax County (VA) and Scottsdale (AZ) have started mounting cameras on traffic lights to automatically photograph the license plates of cars that commit traffic violations.

“What will the police try next — zoom lenses and recording devices?” asked Dasbach. “Will they film us in our back yards? In our bedrooms? Police and politicians have become Peeping Toms — and there’s no place for that kind of intrusive surveillance in free society.”

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