



CAUGHT IN THE WEB of MASS SURVEILLANCE

An ACLU of Missouri Report on the Unchecked Rise of Surveillance Camera Use in St. Louis

By: John Chasnoff

Unfettered monitoring of private citizens by governmental agencies is a threat to the civil liberties of all St. Louis residents and visitors. The right to be free from government intrusion is engrained in our Constitution and should be protected not only by law and policy, but by those elected to serve the people of St. Louis.

The City of St. Louis maintains multiple networks of cameras, including privately operated cameras linked into government systems. Interest in expanding the already existing system and adding dozens of additional cameras continues to grow. For that reason, the ACLU of Missouri recommends the following policies in order to protect the privacy and civil rights of all St. Louis residents and visitors:

- 1) The city should conduct a comprehensive review of camera surveillance and make recommendations for future action based on a cost/benefit analysis. Costs should include the impact of surveillance on civil liberties.
- 2) If camera surveillance is determined to be worth the cost, both financially and to our values, the city should implement consistent policies to govern their operation and protect civil rights.
- 3) Law enforcement should be granted access to relevant surveillance data only when there is probable cause to believe that a specific crime has been committed.
- 4) Any effort to use cameras to track individuals should require evidence that a crime has been or is about to be committed, and a warrant.
- 5) Cameras should be operated with strict policy limitations and built-in privacy safeguards to prevent access to private spaces and information.
- 6) Camera data should be retained for only short periods (no longer than 7 days) unless part of a criminal investigation.
- 7) Access to camera data should be strictly limited to (i) relevant governmental agencies if there is probable cause to believe that the images in question contain evidence of criminal activity, and the images are relevant to an ongoing investigation or pending criminal trial, and (ii) criminal defendants if the images in question are related to the pending charges.
- 8) Any private cameras that become part of a larger government network need to maintain the same standards and procedures that govern the network.