

Co-Chairs Bynum and Manning,

I am a constituent of Representative Bynum and Senator Thomsen.

As a 5th generation Oregonian and Portlander, I am saddened and sickened by the nightly display of police violence and complete lack of accountability for their actions.

REGARDING LC 743: I urge you to PASS this legislation, requiring not only clearly marked uniform identification of agency, but also clear markings of an officer's first and last name on their uniform, not merely their badge number.

Too often Portland Police officers use a numeric identifier on their uniform, and this makes it very difficult at best to identify them or hold them accountable. Efforts by individuals and organizations to get the name of an officer attached to an identifying number have been met with significant bureaucratic barriers completely contrary to accountability, transparency, and public oversight.

(If any of the members of this committee can, on short order, determine the name of Portland Police Bureau's officers #12, and #31, then you have far greater resources than the general public, even members of the Oregon Bar, do.)

As recently as last evening (August 31, 2020) officers engaged in crowd control were captured on multiple sources of video using physical force in making arrests with no clear identifying markings. In one video captured by a reporter for OPB and National news outlets, the arresting officer was seen striking a protester with his fists repeatedly while the arrestee was on the ground, subdued, and the officer had obscured his name markings so as to make it impossible to identify him. Wearing a riot helmet, full tactical gear, and having an obscured name patch (it was covered with tape) will make it extremely difficult, if not impossible to hold the officer accountable should the victim so choose.

As public servants, and as trained law enforcement professionals, there is no reason for a uniformed officer to hide their identity, none. I have a brother and a brother-in-law in law enforcement, the argument of an officer and their family's safety is completely bunk.

Officers do not have their home address printed on government-issued documentation such as driver's licenses, vehicle registrations, and such, and their employment affords them no greater privacy protection under the law as any other citizen.

As representatives of the state, and specifically as professional, trained members of law enforcement with the authority to arrest and use force, they should be held to a much higher standard than the general public. One such standard is making it possible for the public to identify them clearly as law enforcement, and to be able to hold them accountable for their actions.

There is another, more pressing concern, and that is public safety. If the public is unable to identify the agency an officer is working under, or identify specifically the individual making an arrest, how could the public trust that this is a legitimate member of law enforcement? Simply because they say they are?

By that logic, I could go to a law enforcement supply store, purchase similar tactical gear and clothing, assault members of the public, arrest them and place them in an unmarked vehicle, and have the same level of accountability to the public as the officers do.

Yes, we assume the officers are acting legally, but to the person on the street, they appear no different than an armed vigilante, unless clearly marked, and clearly identified. This is a recipe for disaster.

Again, I urge you to pass LC 743, and amend it to require First and Last name identifiers on uniformed officers.

Thank you for your attention in this matter,

Matthew Subotnick

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