

Testimony re 9/3 meeting on Police Force Reform

Hello,

My name is Greg Claessens. I am an Oregon attorney mostly representing patients at the State Hospital.

I am no expert on policing or police reform. However, I think even in ignorance a few things are clear. Police engaged in public policing should be meaningfully identifiable. A name, unit, number, whatever, something that indicates that the officer is duly appointed and that accountability is possible when needed because identification is clear. Preapproved undercover missions are clearly a different consideration. But no protestor should have their rights to free speech curtailed by nameless forcer purporting to represent the government.

Qualified immunity denies the victims of police misconduct of meaningful justice. I think we all know that but have framed the issue as one where this is a necessary evil in service of safety because without it no one would be a police officer. Police work is different from nearly all other government functions. It deserves different considerations, and frankly a healthy degree of officer decision making latitude. However, we must temper this. There has to be a way to separate acceptable police conduct from unacceptable. I and huge swaths of the public feel that qualified immunity does not strike the correct balance. I do not envy your task but don't shirk a responsibility simply because it is hard. Lead. Facilitate justice. Curtail qualified immunity.

Thank you and best of luck in what I am sure is a difficult and thankless task.

Greg Claessens

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