

October 19, 2015

Chairman Charles Grassley
Senate Judiciary Committee
United States Senate

Ranking Member Patrick Leahy
Senate Judiciary Committee
United States Senate

Dear Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Leahy,

We, the undersigned organizations, write in support of the Police Reporting of Information, Data and Evidence (PRIDE) Act. As has been highlighted in recent news stories in the [Washington Post](#) and the [Guardian](#), reliable and uniform reporting is unavailable on law enforcement-involved shootings and use of force in localities across the United States. Government officials, stakeholders, and the public are left without the information needed to foster accountability.

The PRIDE Act (S. 1476) takes a critical step toward improving transparency for accountability. While there are other federal initiatives in place that are intended to capture this essential data, most are not tied to funding and are entirely voluntary. The result is the gap encountered in consistent and comparable reporting nationwide. The bill, in addition to requiring states to report to the Department of Justice any incident where a civilian is shot or seriously injured by a law enforcement officer, and any incident where a law enforcement officer is shot or seriously injured by a civilian, would make grants to eligible States and Indian tribes, including for the cost of complying with the reporting requirements and the cost of establishing necessary systems required to investigate and report incidents. It also requires, as a condition of eligibility, that recipients demonstrate that the use-of-force policy for law enforcement officers in the State or Indian tribe is publicly available.

The specificity required in the reporting is also laudable: the reports must include, at a minimum for each individual who was shot, injured, or killed: the person's gender, race, ethnicity, and age; the date, time, and location of the incident; the number of officers involved in the incident; the number of civilians involved in the incident; whether the civilian was armed with a weapon; and the type of force used against the officer, the civilian, or both, including the types of weapons used. Public access to comprehensive accurate information of this sort is essential to the meaningful exercise of the First Amendment rights to speech and to petition government for redress of grievances.

This bill comes at crucial point. The Congress and the country have a heightened awareness of police-civilian confrontations and the often-tragic results. The data required to be reported is imperative to identifying how and where racial bias occurs in police-relating use of force incidents. Additionally, the grants to the states also provide for use-of-force training for law enforcement agencies and personnel, including de-escalation and bias training.

The urgency of the problems is reflected in the [Police Data Initiative](#) launched recently by the White House, as part of which 21 police departments have committed to release a combined total of 101 data sets that have not been released to the public. The types of data include uses of force, police pedestrian and vehicle stops, officer involved shootings and more, helping the communities gain visibility into key information on police/citizen encounters. The PRIDE Act will both institutionalize and, if properly funded, provide support for the necessary work currently being done and serve to sustain it into the future.

We thank the Senators for introducing the PRIDE Act, and encourage its passage. We look forward to working with you on this important legislation to promote transparency and accountability of law enforcement to the public. Please contact Patrice McDermott at OpenTheGovernment.org (pmcdermott@openthegovernment.org) with any questions.

Sincerely,

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
Amnesty International USA
Arab American Institute
Bill of Rights Defense Committee
Californians Aware
Defending Dissent Foundation
Demand Progress
Government Accountability Project
Media Freedom Foundation
MoveOn
National Coalition Against Censorship

OpenTheGovernment.org
PEN American Center
Project Censored
Public Citizen
Restore The Fourth
Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press
Society of Professional Journalists
Student Press Law Center
Sunlight Foundation
Woodhull Freedom Foundation

Cc: Senator Barbara Boxer, Senator Cory Booker.

Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee: Senator Richard Blumenthal, Senator Chris Coons, Senator Ted Cruz, Senator Richard Durbin, Senator Dianne Feinstein, Senator Jeff Flake, Senator Al Franken, Senator Lindsey Graham, Senator Orrin Hatch, Senator Amy Klobuchar, Senator Mike Lee, Senator David Perdue, Senator Charles Schumer, Senator Jeff Sessions, Senator Thom Tillis, Senator David Vitter, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse.