



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on July 17, 2026

Congressmen Want to Force Feds to Get Warrant to Access Local Surveillance-camera Data

Representative Keith Self (R-Texas) introduced legislation Wednesday that would prohibit federal law-enforcement agencies from obtaining data from state and local mass-surveillance devices, including Flock cameras, without a warrant.

Cosponsored by Representatives Eli Crane (R-Ariz.) and Andrew Clyde (R-Ga.), the Protecting Rights in Video and Equipment Acquired Discovery (PRIVACY) Act would require the Attorney General to “maintain a list of surveillance devices and technologies operated by state or local law enforcement agencies” whose data federal agencies would not be allowed to access absent a warrant. Among the technologies that must be included are “automated license plate readers” (ALPRs) such as those made by Flock Safety, other surveillance cameras, and “long-range microphones.”



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“Americans’ Fourth Amendment right to be secure in their privacy does not disappear just because of new technology or artificial intelligence,” Self said in a [press release](#). “Americans have a constitutional right to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, and our government is supposed to get a warrant before invading that privacy. This bill simply restores that protection.”

Big Brother’s Big Assisters

As the press release points out, Americans’ fears of mass surveillance are well-founded:

Over 6,000 communities in 49 states have installed more than 120,000 ... cameras that line our roadways and city parks, tracking Americans more than a billion times a day. Add in the other technologies such as electronic tracking of cell tower connections, device emissions and wide-area microphones, [and] no American can avoid the reach of technological tracking.

The average American driver has their vehicle surveilled 6-8 times a day, allowing AI to determine their driving habits and track their movements, all without the need for a warrant. This allows large nationwide databases to be established to track every American even when they are not suspected of any particular malfeasance.

Big Brother isn’t just watching; he’s handing out traffic tickets. Concerning Flock cameras, [The New American](#) reported:



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The camera conducts no driver verification. It photographs the vehicle, identifies the registered owner, and issues a citation. The owner is presumed guilty and must prove innocence. To do so, he must navigate an appeals process run not by any government agency but by a private company ... with no transparent criteria, no clear timeline, and no meaningful public accountability.

The Camera Often Lies

Law enforcement also uses data from ALPRs to apprehend alleged criminals. Unfortunately, wrote *The New American*, the cameras frequently make mistakes:

The [Institute for Justice](#) identified at least 24 documented cases of Flock errors since 2018 — innocent people detained at gunpoint, handcuffed in driveways, jailed for weeks — including a couple stopped with a six-week-old baby in the back seat because a Flock camera misread a single digit on their license plate. Another camera [misread](#) an “O” as “0,” and two grandparents were held at gunpoint while their three-year-old grandchild watched from the car. In another case, a camera misread a “7” as a “2,” leading police to detain an innocent man, sic a dog on him, and jail him for several hours.

In addition, reported the [Daily Caller](#), “the cameras have been illegally used by law enforcement to stalk estranged wives and ex-girlfriends.”

Such problems would be more tolerable if, as police insist, the surveillance actually led to the capture of crooks. However, according to the [American Civil Liberties Union](#), fewer than one percent of cars whose license plates are scanned by ALPRs “are connected to any crime or wrongdoing,” while one-tenth of license-plate scans “misread the state.” In other words, cops are collecting data, some of it incorrect, on vast numbers of innocent people in hopes of snagging a few genuine lawbreakers.

On top of that, many state and local law-enforcement agencies [share the data](#) they collect with each other and, in some cases, the feds, all without the need for pesky judicial procedures. Flock claims local agencies must opt into sharing data with any other agency, including those at the federal level. But some police departments told [NPR](#) they belatedly discovered they were giving Washington access to their data and put a stop to it, sometimes by canceling their Flock contracts altogether.

Constitutional Rightists

While many of the local agencies that have quit feeding data to Uncle Sam are in Democratic strongholds that simply don’t like how the Trump administration was using the data, the sponsors of the PRIVACY Act are principled constitutionalists. [Self](#) and [Clyde](#) both have scores of 90 percent on the Freedom Index, while [Crane](#) comes in at a stellar 98 percent.

“For decades, Americans’ Fourth Amendment rights have been desecrated as government entities adopt increasingly intrusive surveillance technologies. State and local systems now collect vast amounts of data, and federal agencies use that information to bypass warrant requirements and core privacy protections,” said Crane. “To counter these Orwellian tendencies, I’m proud to join Representative Self as an original cosponsor of the PRIVACY Act.”

Besides forbidding federal law enforcement from accessing state and local data without a warrant, the bill would also impose a 30-day retention limit on data obtained lawfully (with extremely limited



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exceptions) and greatly restrict the use of federal funds to purchase or install mass-surveillance devices. Furthermore, it explicitly prohibits federal agencies from using “covered surveillance data to monitor, track, or locate an individual based solely on” that person’s exercise of his First Amendment rights.

Said Clyde, “The American people’s Fourth Amendment rights have not changed and are not a suggestion; they are law.”



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