



aclu-cu.org

Monday, August 18, 2025

Dear City Council Members and Mayor Williams,

The ACLU of Champaign County, which represents over 1800 member households, supports passage of the surveillance ordinance, **Ordinance No. 2024-12-042: An Ordinance Establishing Approval, Policy, and Reporting Requirements for Policing Surveillance Technology and Databases**, before the City Council.

There seems to be some confusion and hyperbole about the goal of this ordinance and its effect on the Police Department. No one wants to micro-manage the police. Nor do we want to block the department from acquiring useful new technology. However, Urbana residents have made it clear that they do want their police department to be accountable to our community. And we do want some control over how our personal data is used, stored, and marketed. We have only one mechanism to achieve these goals – our elected representatives. You.

Under the terms of the ordinance, if the police department wants to acquire new surveillance technology, they come to the council and explain what the technology does, why it is important to acquire it, and, most importantly to the Urbana residents we have spoken with, what the company leasing the technology to the police department can and cannot do with the personal data they collect. Requiring this transparency reassures everyone that their voice matters.

We don't know what technology will be invented and marketed to law enforcement in the future. It's clear that Urbana residents want reasonable guardrails placed around their data to protect it and to specify how law enforcement can use it. They want to protect their personal information from private companies that may want to profit from its sale. With this ordinance in place, we will be able to find out about new surveillance technologies before their acquisition and to have a say in whether we approve of this kind of surveillance in our community. We will be able to understand what protections the tech company (organized to maximize profit) provides to assure us that our data, if not involved in any criminal investigation, will be sufficiently protected from misuse.

We deeply appreciate your service to our wonderful town and the attention you have devoted to this issue. ACLU urges you to pass the ordinance.

Carol Spindel, Director of Communications

info@aclu-cu.org

ACLU of Champaign County