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ACLU of Utah Statement on Proposed Salt Lake City Body Camera Policy

SALT LAKE CITY, UT — The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Utah has submitted extensive comments on Salt Lake City’s recently released “Draft Policy Regarding Release of Body Camera Footage.”

The ACLU’s comments focus on three key points: 1) the urgent need for more transparency with regard to law enforcement activities in our communities; 2) the city’s obligations under the state’s Government Records Access & Management Act (GRAMA); and 3) the importance of promoting governmental transparency more broadly.

“(T)he ongoing national dialogue about police-involved shootings is one primary reason for the increasing use of body cameras by police officers,” the ACLU of Utah stated in its written comments, “as the whole point of such technology is to increase transparency, allow the public to see for themselves whether law enforcement use of lethal force is truly justified, and hopefully help prevent or ameliorate destructive protests and violence in its aftermath.”

In its comments to the City, the ACLU of Utah applauds the proactive effort to develop – and make public – this draft policy, which the ACLU describes as “well conceived” and “a significant step towards the goals of open government and repairing the relationship between the public and the police.”

The ACLU of Utah does offer suggestions for improvement with regards to the City’s draft policy. These include: 1) broadening the policy to include incidents where a weapon is fired, but no one is injured or killed; 2) tightening the definition of “a reasonable time” to reflect statutory requirements under GRAMA; and 3) shortening the 30-day interval for re-assessment of decisions to withhold footage.

The ACLU of Utah comments in their entirety can be downloaded at:

<http://www.acluutah.org/images/PDFs-docs/Resources/ACLU-City-Body-Cam-Policy-Comments-170301.pdf>

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