

Lawmakers want answers about federal access to state driver license records

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SALT LAKE CITY (ABC4 News) – A report about federal agents having access to driver license information in Utah is raising some eyebrows in our state.

The state is disputing the numbers from the Washington Post [article](#), but some are still demanding answers.

“It really makes me angry, quite honestly,” said Representative Brian King, (D) Salt Lake City.

The article states FBI and ICE agents had access to driver license information and logged more than 1,000 facial-recognition searches between 2015 and 2017 in our state.

King says that’s only supposed to happen for a legitimate criminal investigation.

“We have never signed off on the idea that everybody who is in the driver license database has wholesale access provided to ICE and the FBI,” he said.

The state denies the numbers from the article.

The Utah Department of Public Safety, which oversees the Driver License Division, says it only shares select information in connection with criminal cases where federal law enforcement provides a specific case number.

DPS tells ABC4 News it only ran 49 searches during that two-year window for suspected drug and credit card fraud cases.

Governor Gary Herbert’s Office released a statement saying in part:

“Governor Herbert believes in respecting the privacy of Utah residents and he is committed to ensuring that Utah’s facial recognition system will only be used for law enforcement purposes and never against law-abiding Utahns.”

The ACLU of Utah is skeptical of the state’s response. They say all Utahns should be concerned about privacy and due process.

“Without knowledge or consent, everyone with a Utah driver’s license, or driver privilege card, may have had their photo analyzed thousands of times by facial recognition software that is known to be inaccurate,” said Jason Stevenson with the ACLU of Utah.

Representative King says state lawmakers will be digging into this to see exactly what is going on and demanding answers.

He says they should get started on that right away.