

## **SURVEILLANCE TOOLKIT: SAMPLE LETTER ASKING ELECTED LEADER TO INTRODUCE A SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGY ORDINANCE**

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*This is an example of a letter to a local elected official explaining your coalition's support for a particular strategic goal, a Surveillance Technology Ordinance, and urging the official to sponsor (i.e., introduce and support) legislation related to that goal. You can send this meeting before or after you have met with that elected official in person. This letter can also be customized for outreach to potential coalition partners. The [blue text](#) should be customized.*

Dear [elected official](#),

We are [a local coalition](#) dedicated to protecting civil rights and civil liberties, including the right to be free from intrusive, discriminatory, and dangerous government surveillance. We write to urge you to sponsor an ordinance for our community that would institute basic transparency and oversight when decisions are made about technologies such as drones, automated license plate readers, and social media monitoring.

We know that when the city makes decisions about surveillance technology in the dark, it doesn't lead to the best outcomes for our [City](#). [[Here, provide an example of a time when surveillance technology was purchased in your community \(or a neighboring one\) without public knowledge or elected leader involvement.](#)] For example, several years ago, our police department obtained a drone without notifying the public—and most City Councilmembers were unaware that they had approved the purchase.

A Surveillance Technology Ordinance would ensure that the public and elected leaders have a voice in decisions about surveillance. To ensure this, the ordinance requires:

- **Informed Public Debate & Council Approval at Earliest Stage of the Process** – Public notice, production and distribution of an easy-to-understand Surveillance Impact Report and opportunity for meaningful public input prior to seeking funding or otherwise moving forward with surveillance technology proposals;
- **Determination by Board That Benefits Outweigh Cost and Concerns** – The Board expressly considers costs (fiscal and civil rights) and determines whether surveillance technology is appropriate before moving forward.
- **Robust Surveillance Use Policy Approved by Board** – Board approval of a Surveillance Use Policy with robust civil rights, civil liberties, and security safeguards for all existing and new surveillance technology; and
- **Ongoing Oversight & Accountability** – Proper oversight of surveillance technology use and accountability through annual reporting and public review by the Board.

This ordinance has proven to be a workable model in more than a dozen US cities and counties, including San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, Davis, Palo Alto, and in Santa Clara County. Using the ordinance, residents and elected leaders are now able to have an informed public debate about new technology using the democratic process and to decide together whether, or how, to acquire or use new surveillance systems.

We would appreciate the opportunity to sit down to discuss our concerns and the need for this legislation here in our City. Please let us if you are available to further discuss this ordinance.

Sincerely,