

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 238, which would expand law enforcement's ability to deploy drone surveillance with minimal oversight.

This bill clears away some Oregon's existing privacy protections by allowing drone use when "responding to any call for law enforcement services" - an authorization that could encompass nearly all police activities.

I would hope the legislature would be more proactive about protecting Oregonians from unmeasured use of these technologies.

I am asking our government to please create a more measured bill that better balances the concerns of Oregon citizens with the concerns for the police. The idea of drone use is honestly frightening to me and contributes to a general dystopian vibe when literally no one wants.

Here are my main criticisms of the bill:

1. it moves away from warrant requirements: who wins when we do this? In our current approach, warrants are the default. This would make warrantless drone use routine.
2. Privacy concerns: Everyday activities could be recorded any time police respond to a call, affecting people who have nothing to do with the situation.
3. Limited accountability: The bill removes key oversight mechanisms that help prevent potential misuse.
4. Expanding uses over time: We've seen with other surveillance tech that uses tend to expand beyond their original purpose.
5. Uneven impacts: Black and underprivileged neighborhoods will experience more drone surveillance than others and receive the brunt of this invasion.

While I recognize the valuable role drones can play in emergency response, search and rescue, and certain investigations, these benefits don't justify wholesale abandonment of privacy safeguards. We shouldn't have to give up our privacy protections to benefit from this technology.

I urge you to reject SB 238 and instead develop legislation that strikes a more appropriate balance between public safety and privacy rights.

Here are some additional things to consider:

1. Potential to discourage free speech: When people know they're being watched from above, they might think twice about attending protests or community gatherings.
2. Questions about data handling: The bill doesn't address how drone footage will be stored, who can access it, or when it gets deleted.
3. Limited transparency: There's no requirement for police to tell the public how often or where they're using drones.
4. Training concerns: Without clear standards for drone operation, there's increased risk of privacy issues or misuse of information.
5. Technological advancement outpacing regulation: Drone capabilities are constantly evolving with better cameras, facial recognition, and tracking systems – this broad law would allow adoption of these more invasive features.

I would like to see more specifics for protections inbuilt to the bill, like public reporting on drone usage statistics, clear data retention and deletion policies, an oversight committee to review drone deployment practices, and explicit prohibitions on using facial recognition or other biometric technologies

I believe we can have effective public safety tools while still respecting privacy. Our current system of requiring warrants with reasonable exceptions for emergencies is already permissive. SB 238 tips the balance too far away from protecting Oregonians' rights.

Respectfully,
Portland citizen Alex Alabaster