



May 15, 2018

The Honorable Cecilia M. Aguiar-Curry
Chair, Assembly Local Government Committee
State Capitol, Room 157
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SUPPORT – AB 3131 (Gloria) – Transparency and Accountability in Military Equipment Acquisition

Dear Assemblymember Aguiar-Curry,

The Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) strongly supports AB 3131 (Gloria), which will enhance transparency and accountability in the acquisition of military equipment in our local communities. Some of this military equipment, including drones and command vehicles, includes powerful surveillance technologies.

EFF is a member-supported, nonprofit civil liberties organization that protects free speech and privacy rights in the digital world. EFF was founded in 1990, is headquartered in San Francisco, and has more than 40,000 members nationwide, including thousands in California.

All too often, government officials unilaterally decide to adopt powerful new military and surveillance technologies that invade our privacy, chill our free speech, and unfairly burden communities of color. Local law enforcement agencies acquire surplus U.S. military equipment from the U.S. Department of Defense's 1033 Program, also known as Law Enforcement Support Office transfers. This has led to the acquisition of military equipment throughout California, without civilian oversight or approval.

According to recent Defense Logistics Agency data, California agencies are holding more than \$136-million worth of military equipment, including thermal imaging equipment, unmanned vehicles, and long-range acoustic devices.¹

We need legally enforceable transparency, oversight, and accountability measures to protect civil rights and civil liberties before military equipment is funded, acquired, or used. Under AB 3131, the power to decide whether or not to adopt new surveillance technologies would rest with the local governing body. Most importantly, the law would provide the opportunity for public notice and comment. The bill also will require the governing body to adopt use policies for any equipment it approves.

AB 3131 will ensure transparency and community engagement. It is a reasonable approach, and absolutely necessary. The lack of public oversight over the acquisition and

¹ Data available for download:
<http://www.dla.mil/DispositionServices/Offers/Reutilization/LawEnforcement/PublicInformation.aspx>

use of military and surveillance equipment jeopardizes the relationship of police with the community.

Very truly yours,

Nathan Sheard
Grassroots Advocacy Organizer

cc: The Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Local Government
The Honorable Todd Gloria, California State Assembly

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