

Testimony in support of SB18 as Introduced

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Recording

“Get away for what? Every time you see me, you want to mess with me. I'm tired of it. It stops today. Why would you...? Everyone standing here will tell you I didn't do nothing. I did not sell nothing. Because every time you see me, you want to harass me. You want to stop me Selling cigarettes. I'm minding my business, officer, I'm minding my business. Please just leave me alone. I told you the last time, please just leave me alone. please please, don't touch me. Do not touch me. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe.”

Ladies and gentlemen, these were the last words of Eric Garner before he died in a police choke hold. I'm standing here today out of breath, no, not from running all the way here, but because of the countless lives that have been lost not only to gun violence, but specifically at the hands of gun held by a police officer. I can't breathe because this is a national emergency and no one is allowing me to breathe. I'm standing here today with the sister of Icarus Randolph, an Iraqi war vet that died at the hands of a Wichita police officer when his family had called for help as Icarus dealt with a PTSD episode during the 4th of July holiday in 2014.

Sadly, I'm not the only person whose had enough and is desperate for air. You all have the power to give us air. The power to address this issue through the application of body worn cameras required by SB18 and the necessary policymaking authority to ensure transparent access to video footage with KORA amendments.

Families the nation over and throughout Kansas are crying out for air. The citizens of Rialto cried out for air from abuse and the city promptly responded with the application of body worn cameras which resulted in a sharp decline in officer complaints and use of force against citizens.

This application would be a success here in Kansas with SB18 and as someone who has first hand experience as an advocate in dealing with the pain, anger, grief and fear that families are often forced to deal with after their loved one is shot by a police officer. What follows often enough is a deep-seated mistrust of police. While the taking of a life of an individual is without a doubt one of toughest decisions an officer makes, the families deserve to know what happened and to keep all sides accountable to the truth of the matter. We can't keep allowing officers to kill with impunity and completely disregard the family's needs. What would give us a breath of fresh air would be a silent witness, an impartial witness, a video camera.

In the long run, body worn cameras have the potential to save tax dollars and protect officers from unfounded allegations and lawsuits, while also working to rebuild public trust. The City of Wichita recently adopted the use of BWC's where I played a key role in their decision and the development of the policy regulating their use. These cameras were paid for partly with grant monies and I feel the same could be done with our state. I also feel that the state has the ability to do more than the city of Wichita with ensuring a true transparent process in gaining access to footage captured with BWC's. Captain White of the Wichita Police Department was quoted in the Wichita Eagle as saying that his

officers wants to wear the cameras which is also supported by U.S. Attorney Gen. Barry Grissom and the police union.

So ladies and gentlemen, I stand here today out of breath, I can't breathe, Icarus Randolph's family can't breathe, John Paul Quintero's family can't breathe, Karen Jackson's family can't breathe, Countless others are out of breath. Will you sit idly by and allow me suffocate? Will you rob us of transparency and accountability? Values which I'm sure all of you appreciate. I stand here today to urge you to enact a policy of the application of body worn cameras by police officers in the great state of Kansas and to ensure a transparent process in the release of such footage to families and the public, which each have a vested interest in knowing the truth. I ask you to put yourself in the shoes of Elisa Allen, try and understand how her and her family feel about the loss of their loved one and the need to answer the question why? Wouldn't you want answers? Wouldn't you demand them? I urge you to do the right thing.

Thank you

LOCAL SEPTEMBER 27, 2014

Officials: Equipping all Wichita police with body cameras a challenging project

HIGHLIGHTS

The Wichita Police Department says it is committed to the mayor's directive of equipping all street officers with body cameras. But it will take more time than some people want, and it will require serious money.

BY TIM POTTER
The Wichita Eagle

The Wichita Police Department says it is committed to the mayor's directive of equipping all street officers – about 450 – with body cameras.

But it is a complicated project that will take more time than some people want, and it will require serious money, Deputy Chief John Speer said Friday. An early estimate is up to \$1.5 million.

"This is something that we will have to do in pieces," Speer said.

Because of variables including body camera supply-and-demand and officer training, there is no timetable so far for completing the project. City Manager Robert Layton said Friday evening that he hopes to have a timetable within the next 30 days.

Although Mayor Carl Brewer initially said he wanted all street officers to be wearing body cameras by the end of the year, when staff began looking at the needs and logistics, it realized the time frame wasn't possible, Layton said. Brewer couldn't be reached Friday.

The city has committed to fully funding and implementing body cameras for police, Layton said.

"We're going to do it right, though," Layton said. "It has to be done in a way that both the police officers and the public ... feel we have the right procedures in place."

Nationally, interest in the use of body cameras and video evidence has increased since Aug. 9, when a white police officer in Ferguson, Mo., shot Michael Brown, a black teenager, sparking weeks of protests.

In Wichita, Brewer made the commitment to try to find the money to “man-up every officer with a camera” during a community meeting in late August called #NoFergusonHere. There has been a string of controversial police shootings in Wichita, most recently the death of Icarus Randolph, a veteran who was shot to death by a police officer on July 4.

Locally, community activists, the police union and U.S. Attorney Barry Grissom also have voiced support for police wearing body cameras.

Djuan Wash, spokesman for Sunflower Community Action, said his group would like to see cameras used by all officers by the end of the year.

“The community would like to see it sooner than later,” Wash said. “Our standpoint on the issue is that the body cameras would help both police officers and citizens,” he said.

“It’s a public safety issue, and it is past due time that these cameras be implemented,” Wash said. “A lot of people in the community believe Ferguson has already been here,” with police shootings. They think body cameras will reduce police use of force, he said.

More and more departments are wanting body cameras, said Speer, the deputy police chief whose duties include overseeing the Police Department’s budget, special operations and training.

Speer noted that the mayor recently expressed his desire to equip officers with body cameras. “We’re going to do what we can right now to meet what his directive is,” Speer said. The department has had 48 cameras spread among the city’s four patrol bureaus and has ordered 12 more. Completing the project will require equipping about 450 officers.

An early estimate of the cost is \$1.1 million to \$1.5 million to fully implement it, he said. “It’s a very expensive project.”

And it’s complicated, he said, because the department needs to develop a much larger system in which people can be assigned to catalog the video, which can be used as evidence.

The cameras have to be incorporated with 20 pounds of gear that officers already wear, including protective vests and belts, and cameras have to be effectively positioned and placed so that they are ergonomic.

Although the cameras don't capture everything, from every angle, "we see many benefits of having cameras," Speer said.

Earlier this week, Paul Zamorano, president of the local police union, the Fraternal Order of Police, provided The Eagle with its talking points on the devices, saying, "The primary benefit of police body cameras would be transparency and accountability. ...

"It could show what transpired during an incident keeping in mind the field of view might not be the same as the officer's peripheral vision. Furthermore, police body cameras do not capture the officer's perception of what he/she is seeing to make that split second decision. What makes the body cameras beneficial is the fact they add further light to the totality of the information."

Zamorano said there is an "expectation that police body cameras would improve both police and citizen behaviors."

He concluded: "The public is protected from police misconduct, and officers are protected from false allegations and complaints."

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POLITICS & GOVERNMENT JUNE 9, 2015

Wichita police recommend \$2.2 million body camera system



BY KELSEY RYAN
The Wichita Eagle

As it moves toward providing body cameras for all patrol officers by the end of the year, the Wichita Police Department is recommending the city buy a \$2.2 million system to use for the next five years.

That cost would include the purchase of cameras; licensing fees and data storage in the first year of \$712,000; and licensing and data storage fees of \$360,000 for subsequent years, according to city documents.

The intent is for all patrol officers – more than 400 – to have the cameras. Supervising officers will not.

Police recommend the city buy Taser's Axon system, said Captain Brian White, who presented the recommendation to the City Council on Tuesday.

White said he researched several body camera systems. The proposed contract with Taser would include upgrades during the five years of the contract – specifically upgrades to the technology to turn on the body cameras automatically if an officer turns on his lights or draws his Taser stun gun, if the company releases that within the contract period.

The department now uses 60 body cameras and has a waiting list of officers who want to wear them, White said.

"Most officers want to wear it," he said.

The Taser system includes the camera, battery and viewing monitor, which looks similar to a cellphone. The city's purchase would also include software to store and access video through Evidence.com.

Through the viewing monitor, officers could watch video and tag specific parts of it, but they could not edit or delete it, White said. The only way an officer could delete video would be by destroying the camera, he said.

The department also is working on a policy for use of the body cameras; it hopes to release a draft in the next month. It is almost complete, but parts about where the cameras will be placed on the body are still being worked on.

Head-mounted cameras are likely the future, White said. The video from head-mounted cameras is typically better quality and can't be obstructed by the arms as easily as chest or lapel-mounted cameras, he said.

There are also questions about how the department will deal with open records requests under state law. The department will have to hire additional staff, possibly four people, to handle the records, White said.

Open record laws vary from state to state, so it's difficult to compare how other major cities have drafted their open records video policies. But White said he thinks the department should err on the side of transparency.

"Generally I feel that being more transparent and sharing is a better way, but we also have to balance that with someone's personal privacy," he said.

For instance, there could be a police altercation that's taped in the presence of a domestic violence victim or a situation in a hospital.

One of the biggest hurdles to implementing the system is funding, White said. The police department is seeking federal grants and plans to also use narcotics seizure funds to help offset costs.

A public hearing will be held before the potential purchase of the cameras. Formal approval of the contract with Taser would come at a future council meeting, said Mayor Jeff Longwell.

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