

The Post Act

The NYPD has quietly amassed a broad range of new surveillance technologies without public notice, debate, or oversight.

These technologies include stingrays, cell phone locators that can track your location and capture data from or disrupt service of all nearby devices, X-ray vans that use radiation to see through walls and vehicles, ShotSpotter, a gunshot detection service with sensitive microphones that can record nearby conversations, and automatic license plate readers that can track and predict your location.

The invasive data collected from these technologies is integrated by the Domain Awareness System which can be used to track you and predict your behavior. Though there is little transparency as to who this information is being shared with, activists learned last year that data collected by the NYPD is being shared with ICE and has been used to deport immigrant New Yorkers.

Under a loophole in New York City law, the NYPD can fund these purchases with private donations and federal grants without notifying our elected lawmakers, thereby reducing the room for oversight by City Council. To make matters worse, we know that these law enforcement tools, like other tools in the past, are being used to disproportionately target marginalized communities, including communities of color and immigrant communities.

How does the Post Act counter these problems?

The dark reality is that, as of now, we don't know the extent of surveillance in our city. Due to a loophole in New York City law, the NYPD can fund these purchases with private donations and federal grants without notifying our elected lawmakers, thereby reducing the room for oversight by City Council.

The POST Act would close this loophole by requiring the NYPD to disclose any surveillance tools it purchases. Along with such disclosure, the NYPD would be required to issue policies and potential impacts for each piece of surveillance technology it employs. Furthermore, the POST Act empowers the Inspector General to hold the NYPD accountable if it does not abide by the guidelines agreed upon by City Council.

It is important to note that the information required by the POST Act will not compromise the NYPD's investigatory duties by disclosing operational details. Given that we know that surveillance technologies in the past have been used to target Muslim Americans, we need the transparency the POST Act offers to know how this occurs and find strategies to combat this discrimination. We can only work towards solutions when we know how surveillance is being used and how the data is being shared.

The POST Act is necessary in order for lawmakers, government and community members to effectively serve as watchdogs and to guarantee the privacy rights of every New Yorker.