



League of Women Voters of Portland

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Date: January 31, 2024

To: Mayor Ted Wheeler, Commissioners Gonzalez, Mapps, Rubio, and Ryan

From: League of Women Voters of Portland
Carolyn Buppert, president
Debbie Aiona, Action Committee chair

Re: Joint Terrorism Task Force Annual Report

The League of Women Voters of Portland first commented on the city's involvement in the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) in 2001 and we have shared our views with City Council throughout the years. We appreciate the annual reports and the opportunity to provide oral testimony.

The League's interest in this issue stems from our mission to promote active and informed participation in government. We believe democracy is strengthened when members of the public vote, express their views before a decision making body, or join in a demonstration.

In Oregon, we are fortunate that state law (ORS 181A.250) protects participation in First Amendment activities, unless there are reasonable grounds to suspect criminal conduct. On the other hand, FBI actions in Oregon and around the country raise concerns that those protections may be ignored when Portland police work with federal agents. Those concerns can and do have a chilling effect on public involvement, activism, and lawful dissent.

In the last few years, news reports covering FBI interactions with members of the public underscore the importance of maintaining vigilance over their work with our police bureau.

Examples include:

- A 2019 Guardian story revealed that the FBI, along with local law enforcement, tracked environmental and Indigenous activists opposing the Jordan Cove Liquid Natural Gas terminal. Last fall, The Intercept published a report on the continued surveillance by local police and federal agents of the southern Oregon activists, in spite of the fact that the proposed pipeline project had been cancelled.
- Recent news points to FBI exploitation of people who may be susceptible to their influence. The last member of the Newburgh, NY Four was recently ordered released from prison. The judge wrote that the FBI invented a conspiracy and sought out the men as their targets. She characterized the last man to be released as incapable of the conspiracy given his "well-documented buffoonery and ineptitude".

League of Women Voters of Portland:

To promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government.

- More recently, an 18-year-old man with autism was arrested at the Denver airport on the way to Dubai to join ISIS. For two years, FBI agents posing as ISIS members encouraged him to support the organization and once he turned 18, they arrested him.

This year's JTTF report notes that two of the six closed 2022 cases the FBI referred to the Portland police were passed on to the Behavioral Health Unit. It is encouraging to see that when it appears there may be a mental health issue, Portland police are able to avoid criminalizing the actions.

In conclusion, the League encourages the city to exercise caution when working with the FBI. In Oregon, we value our rights to engage in political speech and we also believe it is essential to protect our most vulnerable community members from unjust prosecution.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Revealed: FBI and police monitoring Oregon anti-pipeline activists

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/aug/08/fbi-oregon-anti-pipeline-jordan-cove-activists>

Oregon Police Obsessively Spied on Activists for Years, Even After Pipeline Fight Ended

<https://theintercept.com/2023/11/08/oregon-police-surveillance-protests-activists/>

Newburgh Four: judge orders release of man convicted in US terror sting

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/jan/20/newburgh-four-james-cromitie-ordered-released>

Undercover FBI Agents Helped Autistic Teen Plan Trip to Join ISIS

<https://theintercept.com/2024/01/10/fbi-sting-isis-autistic-teen/>