

Austin Police Oversight Act FAQ

Who is behind this?

Equity Action brought the “No Way on Prop A” campaign last year to defend the city against a proposal that would have funded nothing but police for years to come. Now Equity Action has crafted a measure for accountability and transparency in policing. Endorsed by the Travis County Dem Party and others.

What would the Austin Police Oversight Act do?

It creates a local ordinance that strengthens the external civilian oversight of Austin police, greatly improves the transparency of Austin police, and mandates that the City can only approve a police contract if it complies with this ordinance.

How does the Austin Police Oversight Act strengthen oversight?

1. Empowers the City’s Office of Police Oversight (OPO) to access all police records, gather evidence and interview witnesses.
2. Empowers the OPO to make discipline recommendations that drive transparency.
3. Empowers the Community Police Review Commission (CPRC) to access and share information more freely.

How does the Austin Police Oversight Act improve transparency?

1. Ends the practice of keeping police personnel records secret forever: records would be subject to the same rules as sheriffs and most other police departments.
2. Empowers the OPO to make discipline recommendations that drive transparency.
3. Ensures that the OPO and the CPRC can access all of the police records they require.

How does stronger oversight and improved transparency increase accountability?

1. Strengthened oversight helps ensure that legitimate complaints are investigated thoroughly and quickly enough to result in discipline, when warranted.
2. Improved transparency ensures that the facts about an incident become public, even if a poor investigation, the Police Chief, or an officer appeal prevents formal discipline.

How does increasing accountability deter police brutality and misconduct?

1. If officers know that they’ll face discipline for brutality and misconduct, we think they’ll do it less.
2. If officers know that facts about brutality and misconduct will always be made public, our hope is that they’ll do it less.

How would the Austin Police Oversight Act work?

1. Prior to any City Council action to approve any proposed agreement affecting Austin Police Department personnel, the City Attorney shall certify whether or not the proposed contract is consistent with and fulfills each provision of the APOA
2. If the City Attorney finds that a proposed agreement violates the APOA, the City Council won’t be able to vote to adopt the agreement. This ordinance does not void any contract in effect at the time it goes into effect.