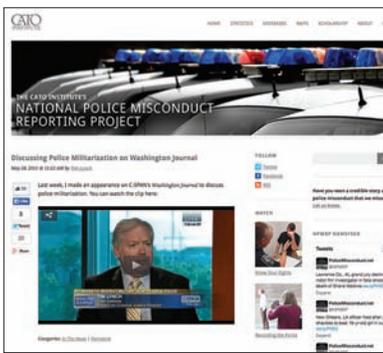


Tracking law enforcement abuse

Three Years of PoliceMisconduct.net

On May 16, 2009, two New Jersey police officers beat 21-year-old James Bayliss during a traffic stop, at one point slamming his head against a tire while his limp body lay handcuffed. Bayliss is mentally disabled. Despite dozens of attempts in the years following the incident, his family received no explanation—though, after a video was eventually made public, the state police acknowledged for the first time that unreasonable force was used.

More recently, the death of Freddie Gray while in custody in Baltimore has triggered a wide-ranging debate about policing in America. In order to grapple



with the difficult issues surrounding these tragedies, the Cato Institute offers PoliceMisconduct.net—a project originally created by a private researcher in 2009. The purpose of the website, which marked three years under the editorship of Cato’s Tim Lynch in May, has been to bring more attention to the problem of police wrongdoing. Ultimately, the goal is to identify policies that will enhance professionalism and minimize misconduct.

To fill the void in hard data on policy impropriety, the Institute’s researchers scan media reports each day to locate news stories on misconduct, record those reports in a database, and transmit the details through a social media newsfeed on Twitter — providing transparent data that allows for independent verification through public review. “We are simply trying to create a ruler with which we can measure police misconduct, so that people can determine for themselves if it’s really a problem,” says Lynch, who oversees the Institute’s National Police Misconduct Reporting Project, of which PoliceMisconduct.net is the cornerstone.

“The victims of police misconduct are too often without a voice, and the extent of the problem was unknown because few seemed interested enough to study it,” he added. “We at Cato thought it important to lend some institutional support to this critical area.” Over the past year, the website has been cited by the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist*, ABC News, the *Atlantic*, and *Frontline*.

Over time, PoliceMisconduct.net will offer a wealth of data on what is currently one of the most troubling threats to our civil liberties. In doing so, the new site dovetails closely with the mission of the Institute at large. “We believe good policy analysis can improve government decisionmaking,” Lynch says. To the extent that PoliceMisconduct.net provides a window into where specific procedures go wrong, we hope to improve lives as well.

PLEASE CHECK OUT CATO’S NATIONAL POLICE MISCONDUCT REPORTING PROJECT BY VISITING POLICEMISCONDUCT.NET.

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DownsizingGovernment.org is complete! Created by Chris Edwards, Cato’s director of tax policy studies, the site is designed to help policymakers and the public understand where federal funds are being spent and how to reform each government department. In identifying specific programs to cut, DownsizingGovernment.org describes the failings of federal agencies and explores the systematic reasons why government programs are often obsolete, mismanaged, and dysfunctional. Edwards describes the site with more brevity, calling it “a great aid to help the layman understand where his money goes in Washington.”

By visiting pages dedicated to each agency and department, users can quickly assess the growth of budgets, pinpointing billions of dollars in cuts that can be responsibly made. The site also now includes an updated charting tool, which allows users to plot real outlays for about 500 departments, agencies, and programs dating back to 1970. Nowhere is more information about the alarming size of the federal government more readily accessible. Simply put, government is too big and needs to be cut. DownsizingGovernment.org shows how to do exactly that.

IDEAS WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

Since 2005 *Cato Unbound* has given readers access to a state-of-the-art virtual trading floor in the intellectual marketplace. Every month one of the world’s leading thinkers presents an essay on a topical issue. A panel of distinguished experts responds, each offering his case before challenging and refining the arguments in an ongoing conversation. Readers are then encouraged to join the dialogue, with these contributions pulled together to create an easily accessible media product that is virtually distinct within the digital realm.

The latest issue of *Cato Unbound* looks at civil commitment, a legal process that involuntarily confines individuals for purposes of medical treatment. It is not intended to punish a crime. Rather, it has been most commonly applied to the mentally ill, particularly those who pose a danger to themselves or others. In recent years, however, civil commitment has been extended to many others, including sex offenders, typically after they have already served a prison term. Is civil commitment ever justified? If so, is it being applied fairly in our current legal system? Visit www.cato-unbound.org to find out.