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## George Castelle: Release of names by police wrong

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- In its press release announcing the names of persons charged with soliciting prostitution, the Charleston Police Department did not make a mistake in deleting the name of a prominent lobbyist. Instead, the police department made a mistake in not deleting the names of everyone else.

The proper job of law enforcement agencies is to enforce the law -- that is, to investigate crimes, make arrests when appropriate, write reports, and turn over investigative files to prosecuting attorneys for use in further proceedings.

It is not the proper focus of law enforcement to shame citizens in press releases, orchestrate embarrassing perp walks, post mugshots for entertainment value, or appear in staged television news shows -- shows that promote themselves by falsely advertising the police as "partners" of the media.

The Kanawha County Public Defender Office represents people charged with crimes who are unable to afford lawyers and who qualify for court-appointed counsel. Some are guilty as charged, some are guilty of something far less than charged, and some are totally innocent. Many are suffering from mental illnesses or other mental limitations. Many of them -- even before conviction -- are facing periods of prolonged incarceration, eviction from housing, loss of employment, loss of educational prospects, and loss of family.

But upon arrest, especially when the presumption of innocence is still intact, none of them deserve to be paraded through the streets of Charleston, in handcuffs, timed to appear live on the 6 o'clock news, humiliated in front of friends and family, with names trumpeted in press releases, and mug shots posted on commercial websites.

I'm glad the Charleston Police Department had the courtesy to omit the name of a prominent lobbyist. I just wish they would extend the same courtesy to the thousands of penniless, non-influential citizens who deserve, but so rarely receive, the same consideration.

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