

Know Your Rights - The Law & You

The easiest way to avoid negative encounter with law enforcement officials is simply to stay out of trouble. If you are stopped, questioned or detained by a law enforcement official, approach him or her with respect, not disrespect. Cooperate with the law enforcement official, even if you feel as though you are being unjustly stopped or questioned. Retain your composure and conduct yourself in a professional manner.

Remember, the first words spoken by either the law enforcement official or the citizen involved may very well determine the tone of the encounter and even the eventual outcome.

The First Amendment protects several basic liberties such as freedom of religion, speech, press, petition, and assembly.

The Fourth Amendment gives people the right to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures.

If you are stopped on the street:

- Stay calm and do not make any threatening motions or comments
- If you decide to answer questions, be factual
- You have the right to remain silent
- You do not have to consent to a search
- If the officer has reasonable suspicion that you're armed and dangerous, you're subject to be frisked

If you are stopped in your car:

- Stop your car in a safe place
- Stay in the driver's seat and do not make threatening motions
- Comply with the law enforcement officials request
- If the law enforcement official has probable cause, your car is subject to be searched
- If you are issued a citation, present your case in court and not along the roadside



If a law enforcement official comes to your door:

- Make sure the individual is really law enforcement
- You do not have to let law enforcement in your home without the proper paperwork
- Determine the type of warrant being served
- You have the right to remain silent
- If you suspect there may be a warrant for your arrest, contact your local law enforcement agency to make arrangements for warrant service

If you are arrested:

- Keep calm and do not resist
- Never attempt to interfere with the arrest of others.
- You should be told the reason for your arrest
- Be mindful of what you say
- You will be handcuffed and taken before a judicial official
- You have the right to make telephone calls

If you feel you have been mistreated:

- Report the case immediately to an agency supervisor
- Provide the law enforcement officer's name, witness information and factual statement about what occurred
- At the conclusion of the investigation, you will receive a letter in reference to your complaint.

How to File A Complaint or Commend a Law Enforcement Official

- In person at the police department or the sheriff's office
- Over the phone, you can call the police department or the sheriff's office to report your complaint or commendation.
- On-line by going to the local law enforcement agency's website and e-mailing the Public Affairs Office or by completing the on-line form.