



MEDIA RELEASE

ACLU SAYS POLICE CHIEF'S TASER STUNT TRIVIALIZES POTENTIALLY LETHAL WEAPON

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Contact: Larry Dupuis, Legal Director, (414) 272-4032, ext. 12.

Milwaukee-- On February 3, 2009, Combined Locks, Wisconsin Police Chief Steve Wulgaert was shot with a Taser to raise money for charity. He told his officers he would agree to be shot with the weapon if they raised at least \$500 for Special Olympics. After being shocked, the Chief said he felt like he was “kicked by a mule.”

“Tasers are not toys. They are potentially lethal, especially when used on the young, the elderly or people with medical conditions. And, as Chief Wulgaert’s experience confirms, they invariably cause excruciating pain. They should only be used as a last resort in controlling a suspect who poses a genuine threat to the safety of police officers or the public,” said Chris Ahmuty, ACLU of Wisconsin’s Executive Director.

ACLU of Wisconsin Legal Director Larry Dupuis, added “The Wisconsin Law Enforcement Standards Board recommends that Tasers be used only to overcome “active resistance or its threat,” and generally forbid their use against verbal aggression, people who are running away, children and older persons, or persons engaged in peaceful civil disobedience. Offering to be shot by a Taser as a fundraiser trivializes the extreme pain and risk of death associated with Tasers. This trivialization fosters the cavalier attitude of some law enforcement officers who have used Tasers against helpless suspects and children.”

Live demonstration of Tasers is commonplace in training for police officers, despite the manufacturer’s warning that “[a]ny student with concerns over present or past medical conditions should refrain from voluntary exposure.” While the painful experience of being shot with a Taser may impress upon police trainees the need to use the device sparingly, shooting someone for charity has no legitimate law-enforcement purpose.

The ACLU of Wisconsin is a membership organization devoted to the defend and promotion of civil liberties and rights for all Wisconsin residents.

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