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Posted at 10:19 AM ET, 04/06/2011

UDC Law hosts forum on bag searches

By Luke Rosiak

The University of the District of Columbia's law school and the American Civil Liberties Union's local chapter will hold a discussion Thursday on Metro's controversial bag inspections policy.

Among invited speakers will be Rep. Bennie Thompson and representatives of the libertarian CATO Institute and Howard Law along with David Alpert of the Metro Riders' Advisory Council and Greater Greater Washington.

The meeting will take place at noon at UDC's campus at 4200 Connecticut Avenue NW near the Van Ness-UDC Metro station. It's in building 41, room A03.

In December, Metro began random inspections of Metrorail and Metrobus riders' packages and bags--or at least those deemed big enough to potentially house explosives. The inspections don't involve opening bags. They usually involve swabs that take about 30 seconds, but if the swab throws a red flag, riders could be subjected to an X-ray process that takes several minutes.

Critics say the random screenings are an ineffective use of resources and that would-be terrorists would just avoid stations that are targeted randomly for screenings--seeing the police presence or hearing about them online and going to a different station or even just using a different station entrance.

Last month, the ACLU said it would sue. Metro "is on a collision course with the ACLU and its partners," Johnny Barnes, executive director of the D.C. chapter, said at the time, indicating that Metro ignored requests to meet with the activist group.

By Luke Rosiak | 10:19 AM ET, 04/06/2011

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