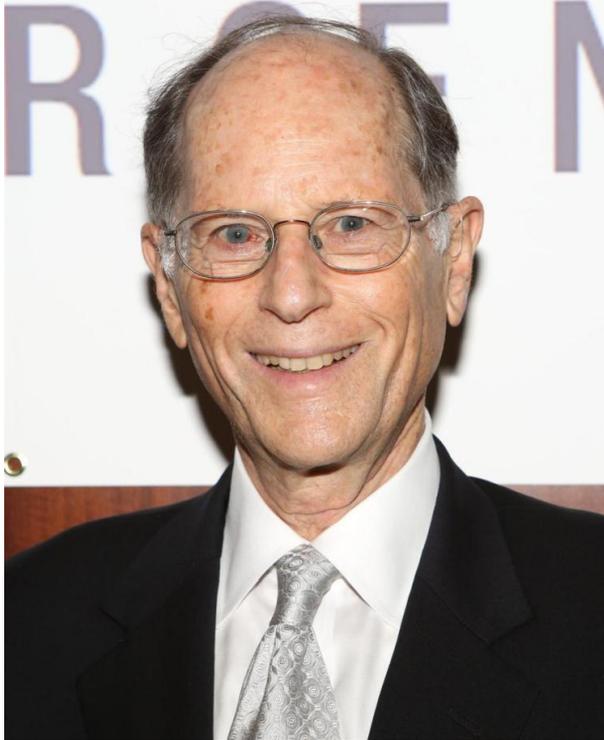


# Reason prevails with NYPD's monitor

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Off on the right foot (Walter McBride/Getty Images)

The big bad wolf that was supposed to be the federal stop-and-frisk monitor named to oversee the NYPD is proving to be both reasonable and realistic.

Peter Zimroth's power over the police stems from a lawsuit that challenged the constitutionality of the department's tactic of stopping, questioning and sometimes frisking individuals suspected of criminality. A judge agreed with the claim in an overly sweeping ruling.

At that point, the question became how to prompt the NYPD to eliminate alleged violations that were never accepted as violations by then-Mayor Mike Bloomberg and then-Commissioner Ray Kelly.

Zimroth, a former federal and state prosecutor who once served as the city's top lawyer, was given the job, adding him to a long list of overseers with the authority to bash the cops. To his credit, Zimroth has avoided the bashing.

His first report to the court reflects appropriate caution with a statement that: "Officers on the street may be declining to stop, question and frisk when it would be lawful and prudent to make the stop."

Among the reasons for that, he said, are uncertainty about "what they are authorized to do under the law, what their supervisors expect of them, what their personal legal liability might be and under what circumstances discipline will be administered."

Throughout, the report shows Zimroth taking pains to reach consensus with Commissioner Bill Bratton, as well as with the department's legal opponents, on instituting reforms.

At the peak in 2011, the NYPD conducted almost 700,000 officially counted stops. This year, the number will likely come in under 25,000. To test whether officers are reporting all stops, Zimroth reviewed audits of 12 precincts that were studied for periods of three to seven days.

The checks found 12 instances in which cops conducted stops without filing reports. Properly, given the small sample of data, Zimroth drew no conclusion as to the prevalence of the issue.

Most aggressively, Zimroth called for testing body cameras on roughly 1,000 cops.

He urged focusing on 40 precincts with high rates of Civilian Complaint Review Board filings. Fifty officers from half the stationhouses — say, the night shifts — would patrol with cameras, while night shifts from the other stationhouses would hit the streets without the devices. The virtue: a controlled experiment designed to prevent a radical change in policing from going wrong.

So far, so good.