



# Geofence Warrants and the Fourth Amendment: What *Chatrie v. United States* Could Mean for Law Enforcement

## Description

Technology is moving faster than the law, and geofence warrants are one of the clearest examples of that tension. In *Chatrie v. United States*, law enforcement used a geofence warrant to obtain Google location data connected to devices near the scene of a 2019 robbery. That data helped identify Okello Chatrie as a suspect, but it also raised a major constitutional question: when police collect location data from everyone in a defined area, does that violate the Fourth Amendment?

## Key Takeaways

- Geofence warrants raise major Fourth Amendment questions because they can collect location data from people near a crime scene before police know who the suspect is.
- The case tests how far the third-party doctrine applies in a world where companies collect detailed location data from users.
- *Carpenter v. United States* remains central because it recognized that modern location data can reveal deeply personal information about someone's life.
- Courts and legal experts continue to debate whether geofence warrants are targeted investigative tools or the digital equivalent of general warrants.
- For law enforcement, the practical takeaway is to focus on narrow time windows, precise geographic boundaries, strong probable cause, and clear minimization practices.
- The Supreme Court's decision could shape how agencies use location-based investigative technology going forward.

For law enforcement professionals, the takeaway is practical. Geofence warrants and similar digital tools may remain available, but they are likely to face close scrutiny. Agencies should be prepared to show why the requested data is tied to the crime, why the geographic and time limits are narrow, and how unrelated data will be minimized or protected. As courts continue to define the rules, staying current is essential.

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