



RESTORING CHECKS AND BALANCES

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, the government has revived a dangerous and discredited precedent of suspending rights and freedoms in the name of preserving national security. Basic liberties such as the right to privacy, free speech and due process have been significantly compromised as thousands of individuals have been detained for excessive periods without charges, countless have been targeted based solely on their participation in First Amendment protected activities, and even our library and medical records have become subject to government snooping without cause.

Yet, over the past four years, a consensus has been building throughout the country—and across partisan and ideological lines—condemning the excesses of post-9/11 measures.

Now is the time to use the debate surrounding the expiration of ten percent of the Patriot Act to hold a broader discussion on safeguarding rights and freedoms. During this debate, Congress and the nation must keep in mind three important points:

THE SUNSET PROVISION IS A CHANCE TO CORRECT PAST MISTAKES

Congress must trust its initial instinct and let the sun set on Patriot Act sections due to expire. At stake are our basic rights to free speech, privacy and government accountability.

THE PROBLEM WITH THE PATRIOT ACT GOES FAR BEYOND THE SUNSET

Unfortunately, many of the most troubling sections of the Patriot Act do not sunset. Sections authorizing the government to search our homes without notifying us for months, or defining “domestic terrorism” so broadly as to include nonviolent civil disobedience would remain in place.

SOME OF THE WORST POST-9/11 ABUSES ARE NOT DUE TO THE PATRIOT ACT

Thousands of immigrants have been wrongfully detained. United States citizens have been labeled “enemy combatants” and denied access to justice. Countless others have been profiled based solely on their ethnicity, nationality, or religion. And yet, none of these appalling acts were due to the Patriot Act. Congress must take this time to reexamine many other aspects of the government’s so-called “war on terror” to ensure that our rights are protected.

THE TIME TO TAKE ACTION IS NOW

Nearly 400 communities—including seven states and more than two dozen localities in New York State—have passed resolutions condemning the Patriot Act and other post-9/11 measures. Congress must address these concerns by supporting the Security and Freedom Enhancement Act (SAFE Act) and the Civil Liberties Restoration Act (CLRA), which would reform the Patriot Act and restore meaningful checks and balances.



JOIN THE EFFORT TO REFORM THE PATRIOT ACT
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