

5/2/06

Dear Representative,

We the undersigned write to urge your support for the bipartisan “NSA Oversight Act,” HR 4976. The NSA Oversight Act simply reaffirms that the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC) is the exclusive process through which foreign intelligence surveillance on these shores must be conducted and the bill insists on full disclosure to the Congress from the President about the domestic targets of the so-called “Terrorist Surveillance Program.”

The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) provides important checks and balances on the use of electronic surveillance on American residents. It provides a sound and flexible process to ensure that those who would do us harm are targeted while innocent Americans are left alone, and it even allows for electronic eavesdropping to proceed for 72 hours before the approval of the FISC is sought in case of an emergency. The FISC has been extremely accommodating to the Justice Department, denying outright only four requests out of almost 20,000 since the court was created.

The NSA Oversight Act reaffirms that under our system of government laws passed by Congress cannot be modified unilaterally by any president but must be amended by Congress in order to change the legal obligations of our laws. The additional requirement that the President submit to Congress a list of domestic surveillance targets that were not subject to FISA oversight will help the relevant committees assess the surveillance and the need for any amendments.

Now that the NSA Oversight Act has been referred to your Committee, we urge you to support hearings and favorable action on this important bill. Americans in this country have fundamental Fourth Amendment freedoms to the privacy of their calls and emails. The NSA Oversight Act would restore Constitutional checks and balances, reaffirming that electronic surveillance cannot be carried out in the United States unless a neutral magistrate finds probable cause to believe the target of the surveillance is a terrorist or is aiding terrorists in their plots. Our nation's anti-terrorism resources must be focused on al Qaeda and not wasted invading the privacy of innocent Americans. This legislation will help ensure that these critical goals are met, not just in rhetoric, but in practice for the security of Americans and our rights.

Sincerely,

Patriots to Restore Checks and Balances
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Ohio Taxpayers Association & OTA Foundation
Center for Democracy and Technology
National Lawyers Guild--National Office."
The Multiracial Activist.
Velvet Revolution
American Policy Center
U.S. Bill of Rights Foundation
Privacy Activism
Rutherford Institute
Open Society Policy Center
Bill of Rights Defense Committee
First Amendment Foundation
NCARL, National Committee Against Repressive Legislation
Fairfax County Privacy Council
Americans for Tax Reform
American Civil Liberties Union
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