



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
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Fact Sheet: Protect America Alert: House Foreign Surveillance Bill Undermines Our National Security

House Leaders Move To Vote On Partisan Legislation; President Bush Will Veto Any Bill That Fails To Provide The Intelligence Community The Tools Needed To Protect Our Nation

 [President Bush Discusses FISA](#)

 [White House News](#)

"Congress should stop playing politics with the past and focus on helping us prevent terrorist attacks in the future. Members of the House should not be deceived into thinking that voting for this unacceptable legislation would somehow move the process along. Voting for this bill does not move the process along. Instead, voting for this bill would make our country less safe because it would move us further away from passing the good bipartisan Senate bill that is needed to protect America."

– President George W. Bush, 3/13/08

This week, House leaders are finally bringing FISA modernization legislation to the floor – but instead of holding a vote on the good bipartisan bill passed by the Senate, they introduced a partisan bill that would undermine America's security. This bill is dangerous to our national security. House leaders know that the Senate will not pass it, and the President will not sign it. The President calls on Congress to end this needless obstruction and pass the bipartisan Senate bill as soon as possible.

Yesterday, The Attorney General And The Director Of National Intelligence Sent A Letter To The Speaker Explaining Why This Bill Is Dangerous To Our National Security And Recommending The President Veto The Legislation:

- **The House bill could reopen dangerous intelligence gaps by putting in place a cumbersome court approval process that would make it harder to collect intelligence on foreign terrorists.** Last August, Congress explicitly rejected this approach when bipartisan majorities in both houses passed the Protect America Act (PAA). It was rejected again last month when the Senate passed new legislation to extend and strengthen the PAA.
 - The House's partisan legislation would extend protections we enjoy as Americans to foreign terrorists overseas and could cause us to lose vital intelligence on terrorist threats. It makes no sense to involve the court before the Government begins surveillance of foreign targets who wish to do us harm.
 - Prior court approval would require intelligence analysts and others to prepare documents for court review, before fulfilling their core duty of protecting our Nation. Intelligence professionals should be permitted to obtain intelligence information that permits them to act before an emergency situation arises - the Government should not be forced to wait for an emergency to develop before it can take steps to gather information needed to prevent that emergency. Many threats will not appear to be emergencies until it is too late.
- **The House bill fails to provide liability protection to companies believed to have assisted in protecting our Nation after the 9/11 attacks.** Instead, the House bill would make matters even worse by allowing the litigation to continue for years. House leaders simply adopted the position that class-action trial lawyers are taking in the multibillion-dollar lawsuits they have filed.

- This litigation would be unfair because any companies that assisted us after 9/11 were assured by our government that their cooperation was legal and necessary. It would undermine the private sector's willingness to cooperate with the Intelligence Community - cooperation that is essential to protecting America. Companies may also be less willing to assist the Government in the future if they face a threat of private lawsuits each time they are alleged to have provided assistance.
 - This litigation would require the disclosure of state secrets that could lead to the public release of highly classified information that our enemies could use against us.
 - Companies that may have helped us save lives should be thanked for their patriotic service, not subjected to multibillion-dollar lawsuits that will make them less willing to help in the future.
 - The House bill may be good for class action trial lawyers, but it would be terrible for the United States.
- **The House bill would establish yet another commission to examine past intelligence activities.** This would be a redundant and partisan exercise that would waste our intelligence officials' time and the taxpayers' money.
 - This provision is unnecessary - the Executive branch informs appropriate Congressional committees regarding intelligence programs and activities, and those committees exercise ongoing oversight of those programs and activities.
 - Duplicating the work of the committees created by Congress to consider such matters would divert operational personnel from their mission to protect the country.
 - It seems that House leaders are more interested in investigating our intelligence professionals than in giving them the tools they need to protect us. Congress should stop playing politics with the past and focus on helping us prevent terrorist attacks in the future.

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