

New bill would expand government's power to search & spy on Americans

Cheney-Specter Spy Deal Threatens Basic Constitutional Freedoms

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Cheney-Specter Spy Deal Threatens Basic Constitutional Freedoms

A disturbing deal cut by Dick Cheney and Senator Arlen Specter is moving through the Senate Judiciary Committee toward the Senate floor. This horrible bill would set government spies loose in new ways that further undermine our constitutional freedoms.

The Cheney-Specter bill would make presidential compliance with federal procedures that help protect Fourth Amendment rights optional.

The bill would also vastly expand the government's power to search and spy on American homes and businesses without any judicial checks. It would allow the government to listen to Americans' international calls, and to read any domestic or international email message of Americans — if they don't know that every sender and recipient is in the United States — without any warrant or evidence an American is conspiring with al Qaeda.

"President Nixon had ordered warrantless wiretapping of Americans and claimed that he was above the law," said Lisa Graves, ACLU Senior Counsel for Legislative Strategy. "History — and current events — show us that FISA, although not perfect, is still needed to help protect our Fourth Amendment rights. Congress should not weaken those protections. These proposed changes ignore the very reasons FISA was enacted in the first place."

The White House has stonewalled congressional attempts to investigate the administration's circumvention of FISA. And two weeks ago, President Bush personally blocked an investigation by the Justice Department regarding the NSA's warrantless wiretapping program.

The ACLU will be pulling out all of the stops to prevent this "Patriot Act on steroids" legislation from passing - stay tuned in the coming weeks to learn how you can be involved.

To read more about illegal NSA spying, go to: www.aclu.org/nsaspying.

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