

August 2, 2006

Dear Chairman Specter,

The undersigned are committed to ensuring the protection of our nation's security in a manner consistent with the Bill of Rights and the rule of law. We commend your efforts to hold hearings on the warrantless wiretapping activities of the Administration.

You have reached an agreement with the White House on new legislation, and the President has given you his commitment that he will submit his program for review if the legislation is enacted.

With the greatest respect for your efforts, we must say that the price of that commitment is too high. Your bill would turn back the clock to an era of unchecked Presidential power—not only by repealing FISA's exclusivity provision, but also by authorizing a domestic wiretapping program far broader and far more intrusive on the privacy of American citizens than the one the Administration has described. Further, your bill would amend FISA in ways that would permit broad new categories of warrantless surveillance by exempting wide categories of surveillance inside the US from the coverage of FISA. We regret to say we have concluded for these reasons that enacting this bill would be even worse than the status quo.

We continue to support your efforts to find a resolution to this constitutional quandary, and we would support the bill (S. 3001) you co-sponsored with Senator Feinstein. However, we strongly oppose the bill you negotiated with the Administration.

Sincerely,

ACLU

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee—Michigan

American Friends Service Committee

Asian American Justice Center

Bill of Rights Defense Committee

Center for American Progress

Center for Democracy & Technology

Center for National Security Studies

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles

Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism

Concerned Foreign Service Officers

Consumer Action

Council on American-Islamic Relations

Doug Bandow, VP, Citizen Outreach

Evan Hendricks, Publisher/Editor, Privacy Times

Fairfax County Privacy Council  
First Amendment Foundation  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Hate Free Zone Washington  
Liberty Coalition  
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers  
National Committee Against Repressive Legislation  
National Lawyers Guild—National Office  
National Security Whistleblowers Coalition  
Open Society Policy Center  
Patriots For Checks and Balances  
People For the American Way  
Privacy Activism  
Remar Sutton, Founder, Privacy Rights Now Coalition  
Republican Liberty Caucus  
Rutherford Institute  
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations  
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee  
US Bill of Rights Foundation