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URGENT: Tell the U.S. Senate to drop anti-privacy provisions from terror bill

WASHINGTON, DC — The Libertarian Party has launched a last-minute national effort to convince the U.S. Senate to either drop the most dangerous anti-privacy provisions from the anti-terrorism bill it is considering on Thursday — or reject the bill entirely.

“This bill does too much damage to the Constitution, massively increases the government’s surveillance powers, diminishes Americans’ privacy, and restricts our fundamental civil liberties,” said Steve Dasbach, the Libertarian Party’s national director.

“That’s why we are urging every American to *immediately* call their U.S. Senators, tell them to modify the USA Act to drop the three worst anti-privacy provisions — or vote ‘no’ on the entire bill. This is our last chance to defend our liberties, and we don’t have a moment to spare.”

The bill, which was passed on Wednesday by the U.S. House on a 356-66 vote, will be considered by the U.S. Senate today. Capitol Hill insiders say passage is all but guaranteed, and President George W. Bush is expected to sign the bill into law on Friday.

But Americans must fight back, said Dasbach, and tell the U.S. Senate to strip out:

■ **“Sneak-and-peak” searches.** Under the “delayed notification” standard in Section 213 of the USA Act, the government could enter your house, apartment, or office with a search warrant while you were away, search your belongings, take photos, and even copy your computer files — and not tell you until later.

“This provision eliminates an important safeguard to the Fourth Amendment’s protection against unreasonable search and seizure,” said Dasbach. “It must go.”

■ **A resurrection of the “Know Your Customer” bank spying scheme.** Title III of the USA Act contains language that requires banks to “conduct enhanced scrutiny” of customer bank accounts, even when no wrongdoing is suspected.

“Apparently politicians can’t take NO (Your Customer) for an answer, because an expanded, global version is back in the anti-terrorism bill,” said Dasbach. “It must go.”

■ **An expansion of the FBI’s e-mail surveillance powers.** Section 216 of the USA Act allows the government to monitor “routing and addressing” information of e-mails through use of its controversial Carnivore technology without a search warrant.

“If this provision goes unchallenged, not only are your Fourth Amendment protections restricted, but your e-mail privacy could be a thing of the past,” said Dasbach. “It must go.”

There are other troubling aspects in the USA Act that should also be eliminated, said Dasbach, but the Libertarian Party is focusing on just the three worst, since time is short.

“Americans need to tell the U.S. Senate in clear, unmistakable terms: Drop these dangerous anti-privacy provisions from the USA Act — or reject the bill entirely.”