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Kevin M Goess, HRH, bepress
Feb 7, 2011

Representative Barbara Lee
Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2267
Independence Avenue and 1st Street, SW
Washington, DC 20515-0509

Dear Representative Lee,

What part of "civil liberties" do the Republicans not understand?

I am a constituent and I urge you to stand up for my civil liberties tomorrow by voting NO on H.R. 514, Rep. Sensenbrenner's bill to extend the expiring provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act until December 8, 2011.

The last time Congress renewed the expiring PATRIOT powers, in February 2010, it was with a promise to fully consider and debate a range of proposed PATRIOT reforms before the next renewal deadline. The need for reform has never been more pressing, as mounting evidence demonstrates that the government has routinely exceeded or abused its surveillance powers under the statute. Just last week, the Electronic Frontier Foundation's new "Patterns of Misconduct" report -- based on thousands of documents obtained using the Freedom of Information Act -- provided new evidence detailing a decade of rampant FBI abuse of its power to issue National Security Letters, a power that was broadly expanded by the PATRIOT Act.

But now, in a legislative sneak attack, the House's leaders have placed a straight reauthorization bill (H.R. 514) on the suspension calendar for a vote on Tuesday. The bill contains NO reforms, will be voted on with NO debate, and there will be NO opportunity for Representatives to propose amendments that would add critical new oversight and accountability provisions to rein in unconstitutional and oft-abused PATRIOT powers.

As a constituent, I ask that you strongly oppose this rushed renewal of PATRIOT powers without any reform and without any debate. Congress should not be rubber-stamping the Justice Department's surveillance wish list, but should instead be doing its duty to act as a check on the Executive Branch. What America needs now is strong oversight by Congress, not an abdication of its role as a co-equal branch of government.

Please stand strong for my rights and vote "NO" on the PATRIOT extension bill (H.R. 514) when it comes to a vote on Tuesday, and demand meaningful PATRIOT reform before considering any PATRIOT renewal.

Sincerely,

Mr. Kevin Goess