

Protesters in DC demonstrate against the Patriot Act



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In Washington DC protesters convened in front of the White House to demonstrate against the USA Patriot Act. The Act gives law enforcement authorities sweeping surveillance powers that have been criticized for endangering innocent American's civil liberties.

"The American citizenry has been giving up their rights over the last eleven years," Tighe Barry of Code Pink told Press TV at the protest. "It's a shame that someone like George W. Bush, who came into power, thought he could just tear up parts of our constitution".

Congress passed a bill in February that extended three controversial provisions of the Patriot Act until May 27.

The three provisions allow authorities to conduct surveillance without identifying the person or location to be wiretapped, permits surveillance of "non-U.S." persons who are not affiliated with a terrorist group, and allows law enforcement to gain access to "any tangible thing" during investigations.

"It creates a very 'Big Brother' atmosphere where the government can monitor everything," Ginger McCall of the Electronic Privacy Information Center said.

The protesters called for a repeal of the Patriot Act, claiming it gave the government too much power to conduct surveillance of Americans. Raw Story

FACTS & FIGURES

The Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT) Act was introduced to the U.S. Congress after the 9/11 and signed into law by President George W. Bush on October 26, 2001. historycommons.org

The Act dramatically reduced restrictions on law enforcement agencies' ability to search telephone, e-mail communications, medical, financial, and other records without a warrant and eased restrictions on foreign intelligence gathering within the United States. securusvault.ch

Thanks to the Act, the FBI has unfairly targeted minority and immigrant communities with its surveillance and enforcement efforts. aclu.procon.org

The FBI and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) rounded up over a thousand immigrants as 'special interest' detainees, holding many of them without charges for months. A 'Special Registration' program now requires tens of thousands of Arab and Muslim immigrants to submit to a call-in interview from which other immigrants are exempted. aclu.procon.org

Both the Bush and Obama administrations have used the Patriot Act to conduct "roving surveillance" of communications, to collect and examine business records and to target individuals who are not tied to terrorist groups for surveillance. The Nation

The Act broadened the discretion of law enforcement and immigration authorities in detaining and deporting immigrants suspected of terrorism-related acts. dm.usda.gov

Congress has until Feb. 28, to extend the expiring provisions of the law enacted after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Republican leaders in both the House and Senate want to extend the provisions permanently, and revisiting the issue in December would interject it into the 2012 presidential race. LA Times

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