



What is FCNL Doing?

Actively participating in a coalition devoted to preserving and restoring privacy—including support of libraries' and bookstores' role in freedom of expression, and resistance to a national I.D. card, to the world-wide data-mining system being developed by a Pentagon agency, to programs in which citizens would be asked to spy on other citizens.

Monitoring Bush Administration designation of citizens as “enemy combatants,” proposals to share law enforcement information with the military, the use of information gleaned under terrorism surveillance for non-terrorism criminal prosecutions, and immigration procedures and policies.

Promoting the “Bill of Rights Defense Committee” (BORDC) grassroots movement (see www.bordc.org).

Joined 20 other organizations in signing a Statement in Opposition to the Military Commissions authorized by the President and the Department of Defense.

Quaker testimonies and traditions support freedom of expression, free exercise of religion, and individual responsibility for responsiveness to matters of conscience—all protected civil liberties under the U.S. Constitution.

The Friends Committee on National Legislation and the FCNL Education Fund have launched a **Civil Liberties and Human Rights Program** in response to the rapid and extensive erosion of civil liberties and human rights under the USA PATRIOT Act, subsequent legislative measures and Administration orders and regulations launched by the USA PATRIOT Act, and provisions of the Homeland Security Act.

FCNL will address these issues using a combination of policy and legislative information, media advisories, and focused public education and advocacy.

We can be safe and secure under effective, Constitutionally permissible law enforcement, without curtailing the freedoms that underlie our strength, creativity, and vision.

FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON



NATIONAL LEGISLATION

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Taking Freedom for Granted?

Questions and Answers about the USA PATRIOT ACT



Friends Committee on National Legislation



Is USA PATRIOT really an acronym? What does it stand for?

Yes, it's an acronym for the formal title of the Act: “Unitng and Strengthenng America by Providng Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001.”

The USA PATRIOT Act was passed by the U.S. Congress in response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11/01. The Act contains provisions on diverse topics such as: money laundering and bank reporting, domestic surveillance procedures, entry-exit procedures and immigration provisions, foreign student monitoring programs, information sharing between federal and local/state law enforcement and within agencies of the federal government, and definitions of new crimes involving terrorism and terrorist organizations.

After passage of the USA PATRIOT Act, the Bush Administration has issued numerous other orders enhancing its **powers to wage the “war on terrorism” with disregard for legislative or judicial oversight.**

Why should I care about the provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act and other Administration actions impacting civil liberties?

The Bush Administration claims that the erosion of civil liberties post-9/11 is necessary to advance the “war on terrorism.” However, Congress has not issued a declaration of war. The Administration has not defined an identifiable enemy, has not named an enemy-state, and has not given the American public a benchmark to determine when the “war” has ended. **Under this rubric, the Administration’s encroachments on civil liberties can be continued forever.**

Some citizens argue, “If I’m not doing anything wrong, then I don’t have anything to worry about.” But, who decides what conduct is “wrong?” In anti-terror legislation and Executive Orders, the Administration has the capacity to decide what conduct is “wrong,” without Congressional oversight, without public input, and without judicial review. **Under this structure Americans have no assurance that exercise of free speech or political dissent will not become prohibited conduct.**

Draconian detention sweeps and reporting measures imposed on immigrants to our country from the Middle East and South Asia are reminiscent of the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II and black-listing during the McCarthy era. **Our nation is repeating the shameful errors from our past. We must act now so that we don’t look back on this, the post-9/11 era, with shame as well.**

The trade-off between civil liberties and security is a false choice. The exercise of civil liberties does not increase the likelihood of terrorist acts. Likewise, curtailment of civil liberties does not increase public safety.

What trends that impact civil liberties are emerging during this post-9/11 era?

1. Reduced judicial review of Administration actions.
2. Limited Congressional oversight of Administration actions.
3. Decreased publicly-available information about government activities.
4. Increased surveillance over citizens’ private information without suspicion of crime.
5. Increased federal control over state and local law enforcement.
6. Deteriorating treatment of immigrants.
7. Melding of previously separated federal law enforcement and intelligence-gathering functions.
8. Increased use of “emergency” legislation without sufficient public hearing and input.

What can I do?

1. **Check the FCNL web-site (www.fcnl.org)** for updated information and opportunities for further action.
2. **Support the Bill of Rights Defense Committee movement** to defend the Bill of Rights through local initiatives (see www.bordc.org). (More than 2 dozen local jurisdictions have passed resolutions to date, with dozens more being organized.)
3. **Send your financial contributions to FCNL** in support of the civil liberties and human rights program.

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