

THE CONSTITUTION PROJECT



Safeguarding Liberty, Justice & the Rule of Law

Constitution Project Urges Congress to Reform Patriot Act Now, Not to Simply Reauthorize Expiring Provisions

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 24, 2011

CONTACT: Dallas Jamison, Senior Communications Director; cell- 720.333.1494;
djamison@constitutionproject.org

WASHINGTON- Three provisions of the Patriot Act are set to expire by the end of this week. The Constitution Project (TCP) calls on Congress to take this opportunity to enact critical and urgently needed reforms to the Patriot Act as it considers legislation to reauthorize the Act. The Senate is scheduled to debate reauthorization of the expiring provisions today, and the House will take up the issue later this week.

All three expiring provisions, the "business/library records," "roving wiretaps," and "lone wolf," should be allowed to sunset unless significant reforms are made to protect the rights of Americans. In addition, although it is not one of the expiring provisions of the Act, the authority for National Security Letters (NSLs) should be reformed to limit the scope of NSLs and the potential for abuse. Several Senators have filed amendments designed to incorporate such safeguards. TCP urges support for these amendments, including one co-sponsored by Senators Leahy and Paul.

The following may be attributed to Sharon Bradford Franklin, Senior Counsel for The Constitution Project:

"As it considers reauthorization of the Patriot Act, Congress should take this opportunity to restore robust protections for constitutional rights and civil liberties. Congress should avoid a straight reauthorization of the expiring provisions, which fail to safeguard individual rights. Most critically, Congress should rein in the use of National Security Letters (NSLs), whose abuse has been repeatedly documented by the Justice Department's Inspector General. We urge support for amendments such as the one co-sponsored by Senators Leahy and Paul, to ensure that the Government retains the surveillance powers it needs, while still safeguarding individual rights."

In September 2009, TCP's bipartisan Liberty and Security Committee released a [Statement on Reforming the Patriot Act](#), urging that Congress should reform the NSL provision and only reauthorize the three sunset provisions if they are amended to include more robust protections for constitutional rights and civil liberties.