

May 6, 2015

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
House Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Reid, Speaker Boehner, and Minority Leader Pelosi:

We, the undersigned organizations, write in opposition to S.1035, which would seek a straight reauthorization of Section 215 of the Patriot Act.

Our coalition represents privacy, human rights, civil rights, and government transparency advocates spanning the political spectrum. However, we stand united in our opposition to S.1035, which seeks to reauthorize Section 215 without modification.

Almost two years ago, the United States' bulk surveillance programs operating under Section 215 of the Patriot Act and other authorities were revealed to the public. These bulk surveillance programs raise serious constitutional concerns, erode global confidence in the security of digital products, and are unnecessary for national security. These sentiments were echoed by the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board, which concluded that daily collection of Americans' phone records under Section 215 both lacked a legal basis and failed to prevent even a single terror attack.

Policymakers on both sides of the aisle, along with members of the public, have consistently urged Congress to take action to restore accountability, transparency, and faith in intelligence agencies. Despite this, Congress has yet to enact meaningful reforms that would end bulk collection, preserve privacy, and protect human rights.

In the absence of meaningful reform, it is unacceptable to rubber stamp reauthorization of an authority that the government has used to spy on millions of innocent Americans.

Section 215 of the Patriot Act was never intended to be permanent. The sunset provisions were designed to allow Congress to assess and respond to the privacy and civil rights impacts of the law. Proposals such as S.1035 ignore this original intention and fail to address the deleterious impact that mass surveillance conducted under Section 215 continues to have on our privacy, economy, and democracy.

Accordingly, we urge you to oppose S. 1035.

Sincerely,

Access
Advocacy for Principled Action in Government
American Association of Law Libraries
American Booksellers for Free Expression
American Civil Liberties Union
American Library Association
American Society of News Editors
Amnesty International USA
Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
Association of Alternative Newsmedia
Association of Research Libraries
Bill of Rights Defense Committee
Brennan Center for Justice
Center for Democracy and Technology
Center for National Security Studies
Constitutional Alliance
Council on American-Islamic Relations
Cyber Privacy Project
Defending Dissent Foundation
Demand Progress
DownsizeDC.org
Electronic Frontier Foundation
Fight for the Future
FirstAmendment.com
Free Press Action Fund
FreedomWorks
Government Accountability Project
Gun Owners of America
Hackers/Founders
Human Rights Watch
Liberty Coalition
Massachusetts Pirate Party
Media Alliance
NAACP
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
National Coalition Against Censorship
National Security Counselors
New America's Open Technology Institute
OpenTheGovernment.org
PEN American Center
People For the American Way
Privacy International
Project On Government Oversight (POGO)
R Street
Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press
Restore the Fourth
Student Net Alliance
Sunlight Foundation
TechFreedom
The Constitution Project
Venture Politics
World Privacy Forum