

The USA PATRIOT Act

Government Actions that Threaten Our Civil Liberties

New legislation takes away our freedoms

With great haste and secrecy and in the name of the "war on terrorism", the federal government passed legislation with sweeping new powers that undermine the Bill of Rights without demonstrating that these powers are necessary to keep us safe. This 342-page law was passed on October 26, 2001 by the US Congress and signed by the President *without even being read and debated by Members of Congress*. Many of its provisions had been declared unconstitutional in the past.

What are the rights that are being threatened?

- **First Amendment** - Freedom of religion, speech, assembly, and the press.
- **Fourth Amendment** - Freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures without probable cause.
- **Fifth Amendment** - No person to be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law.
- **Sixth Amendment** - Right to a speedy public trial by an impartial jury, right to be informed of the facts of the accusation, right to confront witnesses and have the assistance of counsel.
- **Eighth Amendment** - No excessive bail or cruel and unusual punishment shall be imposed.
- **Fourteenth Amendment** - All persons (citizens and non-citizens) within the US are entitled to due process and the equal protection of the laws.

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- Creates a new crime of "domestic terrorism" that labels lawful advocacy groups as "terrorist" bodies and subjects them to surveillance, wiretapping, harassment, and criminal action for legal political advocacy.
- Allows FBI spying on religious and political organizations and individuals without having evidence of wrongdoing.
- Expands the ability of law enforcement to conduct secret searches, gives them wide powers of phone and internet surveillance, and access to highly personal medical, financial, mental health, and student records with minimal judicial oversight.
- Allows investigation of American citizens for criminal matters without probable cause if they say it is for "intelligence purposes".
- Permits non-citizens to be jailed based on mere suspicion and to not be allowed readmission to the US for engaging in free speech. Suspects may be detained indefinitely without charges or court review even if they have never been convicted of a crime.

New Federal Executive Orders

- 8,000 Middle Eastern and South Asian immigrants have been interrogated because of their religion or ethnic background, not because of actual wrongdoing.
- Thousands of men, mostly of Arab and South Asian origin, have been held in secretive federal custody for weeks and months, sometimes without any charges filed against them. The government has refused to publish their names and whereabouts, even when ordered to do so by the courts.
- The press and the public have been barred from immigration court hearings of those detained after September 11th and the courts are ordered to keep secret that the hearings are taking place.
- The government is allowed to monitor communications between federal detainees and their lawyers, destroying the rights of attorney-client privilege.
- President Bush has ordered military commissions to be set up to try suspected terrorists who are not citizens, with the accused being convicted on hearsay and secret evidence by only two-thirds vote.
- American citizens suspected of terrorism are being held indefinitely in military custody without being charged and without access to lawyers.

What can be done?

This lack of due process and accountability violates the rights extended to all persons, citizens and non-citizens, by the Bill of Rights. It resurrects the illegal COINTELPRO-type programs of the '50's, '60's, and '70's, where the FBI sought to disrupt and discredit thousands of individuals and groups engaged in legitimate political activity.

The American Civil Liberties Union, along with Arlington United for Justice with Peace and thousands of organizations and individuals concerned with protecting our civil rights and civil liberties, are campaigning to repeal the Act.

Join us in this effort to regain our hard-won freedoms.

- Join/contribute to the Dutchess County BORDC.
- Support A Resolution Regarding the USA PATRIOT Act and the Protection of Civil Rights and Liberties, which asks your town to join towns across the nation in upholding the Bill of Rights.
- Contact your elected representatives and the President to express your opposition to the USA PATRIOT Act. Send letters to local newspapers. Organize discussions in your schools, organizations and religious institutions.
Call Congress at 1-800-839-5276
- Support the ACLU Civil Liberties Task Force, the Cato Institute and others in their campaigns to repeal the USA PATRIOT Act.

Dutchess County Bill of Rights Defense Committee
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For more information go to: www.bordc.org • www.repealnow.org • www.bongoboy.com/peace

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