

THE USA PATRIOT ACT

D: The Patriot Act is an assault on American civil liberties.

R: Extensive congressional overseeing has found no civil liberties violations since the legislation was enacted four years ago. Six reports by the Justice Department's independent Inspector General, who is required to solicit and investigate any allegations of abuse, found no violations. Intense public scrutiny has yet to find a single civil liberty abuse. Even Sen. Diane Feinstein (D-CA) noted she had "never had a single abuse" reported to her.

D: The Patriot Act's benefits to Americans' security is miniscule when compared to its implications for their civil liberties.

R: The Patriot Act has been widely successful in its objective: preventing terrorist attacks and protecting Americans at home.

- more than 150 terrorist threats and cells have been disrupted
- nearly two-thirds of al-Qaeda's known senior leadership has been captured or killed
- more than 3,000 operatives worldwide haven been incapacitated
- more than 500 individuals linked to 9/11 have been removed from the country
- more than 400 individuals in the United States have been criminally charged for terrorism-related offenses

D: The Patriot Act "expands terrorism laws to include 'domestic terrorism' which could subject political organizations to surveillance, wiretapping, harassment, and criminal action for political advocacy."

R: The Patriot Act limits "domestic terrorism" to conduct that breaks criminal laws, endangering human life. "Peaceful groups that dissent from government policy" without breaking laws cannot be targeted.

Peaceful political discourse and dissent is one of America's most cherished freedoms, and is not subject to investigation as domestic terrorism. Under the Patriot Act, the definition of "domestic terrorism" is limited to conduct that (1) violates federal or state criminal law and (2) is dangerous to human life. (Patriot Act, Section 802)



D: The ACLU has claimed that "Many [people] are unaware that their library habits could become the target of government surveillance. In a free society, such monitoring is odious and unnecessary. . . The secrecy that surrounds section 215 leads us to a society where the 'thought police' can target us for what we choose to read or what Websites we visit." (ACLU, July 22, 2003)

R: Reality: The Patriot Act specifically protects Americans' First Amendment rights, and terrorism investigators have no interest in the library habits of ordinary Americans.

Historically, terrorists and spies have used libraries to plan and carry out activities that threaten our national security. If terrorists or spies use libraries, we should not allow them to become safe havens for their terrorist or clandestine activities. The Patriot Act ensures that business records - whether from a library or any other business - can be obtained in national security investigations with the permission of a federal judge.

Much of this information was compiled from the United States Department of Justice.

For an even more detailed version of "Myth v. Fact" on the USA PATRIOT Act, visit:
http://www.lifeandliberty.gov/subs/add_myths.htm



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